Smacking legislation passed by Scottish Parliament

The Scottish Parliament has voted to pass the Children (Equal Protection from Assault)(Scotland) Bill, which will bring in a ban on physical punishment, or smacking, of children and give children the same protection from assault as adults when it comes into force. The Bill was introduced by John Finnie MSP, backed by 84 votes to 29 against in the Scottish Parliament, and will end the defence of reasonable chastisement for people accused of assaulting a child.
Responses to child cruelty consultation analysed

The Scottish Government has published analysis of the responses to its recent consultation on proposals to modernise the criminal offence of child cruelty. The document summaries the views submitted to the consultation on proposed amendments to section 12 of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 and the proposed extension of the definition of a ‘position of trust’ as included in the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009. The analysis shows strong support for reform and modernisation of section 12, with almost all endorsing a review. Including emotional (or psychological harm) in the definition was viewed as especially important. On the position of trust, most respondents commented that the definition should extend beyond the definition of those doing ‘regulated work’.

Early Learning and Childcare

New ELC online resources announced by Minister

A new suite of free online training resources has been announced by Childcare Minister Maree Todd at the Scottish Childminding Association Annual Conference in Stirling. The new resources will support childminders on issues such as responding to additional support needs, delivering learning outdoors and supporting the development of early language and literacy. The initiative was launched as part of the Scottish Government’s ongoing drive to increase the quality of early learning and childcare services ahead of the expansion in 2020. The new learning modules, which are currently under development, will be available to all those working in the early years and childcare sector.

Latest progress report on early learning and childcare expansion

The Scottish Government’s Improvement Service has published the ‘Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress Report’ for September 2019, providing an update on progress and updated forecasts for the remaining reporting periods. The report shows that there is “significant variability” at the local level, with a number of local authorities being ahead of their forecast position and a number behind. It is also stated that “approximately 700 new or amended Care Inspectorate registrations are currently forecast over the next 10 months with around 350 requiring approval in August 2020”, and that currently 277 facilities are looking to register additional capacity using the indoor/outdoor model.

Concerns over impact of living wage increase on early years providers (England)

Early learning and childcare providers have responded to the UK Government’s plans to increase the national living wage to £10.50 an hour, suggesting the move could lead to the closure of nurseries and other settings. The Early Years Alliance, the National Day Nurseries Association and the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years agreed that childcare professionals were due a rise in
wages, but proper funding would be needed from the Government for its flagship childcare schemes to avoid closures. The Chancellor of the Exchequer also announced that the age at which workers are eligible for the national living wage would be lowered from 25 to 21.

**Looked After and Accommodated Children**

‘Hope’ may help promote better future for children and young people in secure care

The Centre for Youth & Criminal Justice (CYCJ) discusses a report published by themselves and the University of Strathclyde on how the concept of hope might help to promote better futures for vulnerable and high risk young people who are involved in secure care. The ‘Talking Hope’ project is exploring the factors identified as important by young people, and the staff who support them, in achieving hope, and the report focuses on Phases 1 and 2 of the project. Key messages from the report highlight:

- the benefits of making time for respectful conversations, which include the voices of young people, to challenge assumptions and recognise the contribution that everyone can make
- the importance of relationships, including those that are practice-based, for vulnerable young people, who need support to build and maintain hope, to imagine a better future and take steps to make that happen.
- the role of interagency collaboration and a whole system approach in further maintaining hope for practitioners, as a precondition for promoting hope amongst young people
- effective supervision and support for practitioners and centre staff that enables them ‘to get up in the morning and do their job’
- implications for young people when transitions out of secure care to adult services are not managed well
- the need for comprehensive mental health provision for children and young people

**More financial support for care-experienced students**

The upper age limit on the Care Experienced Bursary has been removed, as part of the Scottish Government’s plan to improve access to further or higher education for care experienced students. From autumn 2020, more care-experienced people will be eligible for an annual £8,100 a year bursary when the upper age limit of 26 is removed. It was recently announced by higher education institutions in Scotland that care-experienced applicants who meet minimum entry requirements will be guaranteed an offer of an undergraduate place at university.
Social care records may not include children's voices (England)

Community Care reports on a study, ‘MIRRA (Memory – Identity – Rights in records – Access), which collected interview and focus group data from over 80 social work practitioners, information professionals and care leavers, who discussed their experience of accessing records later in life. The study reportedly finds that children and young people’s voices may often not be included in their records, which can cause care leavers “significant distress” as they can place “huge significance” on their records.

Mental Health

Recommendations made by suicide prevention leadership group

The Scottish Government has published the National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group’s first annual report. The Group was established in September 2018 to support the delivery of the new suicide prevention action plan Every Life Matters. The report makes 11 recommendations to the Scottish Government and COSLA, which include improving the provision of accessible data about suicides; the introduction of multiagency reviews of all deaths by suicide in community settings; considering a system to review all deaths by suicide of young people who have left the care system; and introducing a new model of care for those who have been bereaved by suicide.

Terms of reference for advisory group on healthy body image

The Scottish Government has published the terms of reference for the Healthy Body Image for Children and Young People Advisory Group. The purpose of the advisory group is to undertake a six month review across Scotland to understand more about body image and how it can affect children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing. The advisory group will then provide recommendations and advice to Scottish Ministers on further actions to help children and young people achieve a healthy body image. The agenda and minutes of the group’s first meeting in August have also been published. The agenda for the group’s meeting in September is also available.

New mental health research centre to focus on young people

A new £10 million research centre is to be opened at Cardiff University looking at mental health problems in young people, according to the BBC. The Wolfson Centre will focus on developing new ways of reducing anxiety and depression in young people and will look at whether parents, family or genetic factors play a part. Other factors such as social media will also be examined. The University will also work jointly with Swansea University to use anonymous medical records to better understand the long-term outcomes of young people with anxiety and depression.
Other

**Consultation on draft Carers Strategic Policy Statement**

The Scottish Government has launched a consultation on its draft Carers Strategic Policy Statement. The statement is “intended to maximise the benefits from national policies and approaches intended to support carers (including major ongoing reforms such as implementation of the Carers (Scotland) Act and the development of our new social security powers for carers),” by connecting a wide range of existing policies. The document maps the main policies across the Scottish Government which will be particularly relevant to carers, focussing on four aspects of carer support: Carer Voice and Engagement; Health and Social Care Support; Social and Financial Inclusion; Young Carers. The closing date is Friday 13 December 2019.

**Consultation on second National Action Plan for Human Rights**


SNAP 2 is a collaborative programme of action that brings together people with lived experience of human rights issues, civil society organisations, government and public authorities with a shared aim of building a Scotland where everyone’s human rights are fully respected, protected and fulfilled. The vision for SNAP 2 is “A Scotland where all can live with human dignity.” The action plan sets out seven outcomes to be achieved by 2030. Within this there are 25 human rights themes, covering areas such as children and young people’s rights. From this there are 60+ actions to be met by 2025. The closing date is 16 December 2019.

**Government responds to consultation on children’s services planning**

The Scottish Government has published its response to the recent consultation on the effectiveness of current statutory guidance which supports children’s services planning under Part 3 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Part 3 of the Act places a duty on each local authority and the relevant health board, to jointly prepare a children's services plan for the area of the local authority covering a 3 year period. Reflecting on the consultation responses and findings, the Scottish Government said it would revise the statutory guidance to reflect what they have been told, to be published in advance of the next reporting date.

**Interactive tool to support social care recruitment**

The Scottish Social Services Council has highlighted the interactive online tool, A Question of Care: A career for you, which showcases social care roles in videos that can help people understand the challenges that can happen in day to day practice and test their attitudes and values. Care roles included in the tool are nursery worker, residential care worker, support worker, domiciliary care worker and personal assistant. A Question of Care is produced by Skills for Care and Development, which is a partnership of the SSSC, Northern Ireland Social Care Council, Social Care Wales and Skills for Care.
Young people feel better after spending time with older people, charity survey finds

Young people feel more positive after spending time with older friends or relatives, according to a survey commissioned by Age Scotland. The YouGov survey found that 59% of responding 18-34 year olds feel either proud, happy uplifted or inspired when spending time with someone over the age of 65. Age Scotland has highlighted the findings alongside its Share What You Love campaign to address loneliness.

Call for inspections of children’s services to focus more on practice (England)

Children & Young People Now reports on an independent review of the implementation of the inspection of local authority children’s services framework in England. The review found that the framework, introduced in January 2018 as a replacement for the single inspection framework, could focus more on the quality of practice in children’s services departments rather than processes. The report concluded that although the new framework does get closer to social workers than previous schemes, which results in some important insights, it still relies too heavily on process data and the internal workings of the organisations rather than focusing on the experiences of children and families.

Parenting classes have positive impact on child’s outcomes and public purse (England)

The BBC reports on a new study by King’s College London highlighting the positive impact of parenting classes on family relationships. The study concluded that young people who display antisocial behaviour, who do not feel cared about by their parents, will cost more socially than those who feel well supported. However, the research shows that early intervention can improve outcomes for the child as well as reduce the financial burden on society. The authors of the study said the findings make the case for considerable investment in parenting programmes.
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 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.

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