Additional Support Needs

Autism toolkit to support parents in early years

A toolkit to help parents support children through the autism journey in the early years has been launched by Ambitious about Autism. The guide provides information, practical tips, and checklists designed to empower parents with the knowledge to support their children, their families, and themselves. The toolkit comes after the charity found that many parents feel there is a lack of support both when awaiting autism assessment and following an autism diagnosis.

Views sought on resources for social workers working with people with autism and learning disabilities

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) is seeking views on developing resources for social workers working with autistic people and people with learning disabilities. BASW has produced capabilities statements and continuous professional development frameworks on working with autistic adults and adults with learning disabilities. BASW is now developing additional resources and activities to support social workers working with autistic people and individuals with learning disabilities to help embed the frameworks into social work practice.
Child Protection

Disclosure (Scotland) Bill approved at Stage 1

MSPs have unanimously approved the general principles of the Disclosure (Scotland) Bill following a debate in the Scottish Parliament. During the debate, the Minister for Children and Young People emphasised the Scottish Government’s commitment to introducing amendments at Stage 2 in response to some of the Education and Skills Committee’s concerns raised in its Stage 1 report. Also during the debate, Labour MSP Iain Gray requested that the Committee examine regulated roles further at Stage 2, so that organisations such as Shared Lives Plus could be given parity with foster carers who care for children. Members also welcomed the Government’s commitment to clarify the definition of protected adults at Stage 2.

Edinburgh child neglect campaign launched

A campaign to raise awareness of child neglect and to encourage families to seek help has been launched by City of Edinburgh Council and NSPCC Scotland. All of Us has been launched by the city’s Child Protection Committee to help people find out where to get support and advice with parenting or other worries about family life and where to turn if they have concerns about a child. The campaign will also raise awareness among communities and professionals about the early signs of child neglect and how to help families who are struggling.

Early Learning and Childcare

Haddington nursery first in Scotland to receive paediatric first aid recognition

Pear Tree Nursery in Haddington has become the first in Scotland to be recognised for its gold standard for paediatric first aid in early years. The nursery has been awarded Millie’s Mark, a scheme delivered by the National Day Nurseries Association to keep children as safe as they can be in nursery through training, policies and procedures above national standards.

Recommendations aimed at improving maths skills among 3 – 7 year olds

Integration of mathematics into daily activities and the use of story and picture books are among the recommendations in a new report on improving mathematics in the early years. The Education Endowment Foundation charity offers five recommendations, as well as case studies and examples, aimed at supporting early years settings and schools to help develop the maths skills of 3 – 7 year olds.

Health

Study into drinking among under 18s post minimum unit pricing introduction

A study into drinking among young people under 18 following the introduction of minimum unit pricing (MUP) has been published by NHS Health Scotland. The study,
conducted by Iconic Consulting, investigated the impact of MUP on a group of 50 13 - 17 year olds who reported drinking alcohol both before and after the implementation of MUP in Scotland in May 2018. The study found that young people had observed changes in product price, and to a lesser extent availability, but MUP did not impact on their acquisition, consumption or related behaviours, either positively or negatively. Many of the products favoured by participants were already being sold above 50 pence per unit before MUP was introduced.

Expert group reports on preventing harmful sexual behaviour among children

Proposals on preventing and responding to harmful sexual behaviour involving children and young people have been set out by an expert group. The Expert Group on Preventing Sexual Offending Involving Children and Young People was established following Scottish Government research highlighting a growth in online-enabled sexual crimes affecting younger female victims, with younger male perpetrators. Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf said Scotland should pioneer a public health response, announcing plans for a multi-agency group to oversee work around prevention and support for parents, carers and practitioners such as such as teachers and social workers.

Latest health inequalities monitoring report published

The latest Long-term Monitoring of Health Inequalities report has been published by the Scottish Government. The report monitors indicators of health inequalities, including life expectancy, premature mortality, mental wellbeing, and indicators of morality. The report found that significant health inequalities remain across all categories, with the exception of the healthy birthweight indicator.

Latest vaccination newsletter issued

The latest issue of the Vaccination Transformation Programme e-newsletter has been published by NHS Health Scotland. The newsletter provides quarterly updates on work underway to modernise the delivery of vaccinations across Scotland.

Justice

Inspectorate calls for ‘major overhaul’ in use of separation (England and Wales)

A ‘major overhaul’ of the way isolation is used in relation to young people, according to a report by HM Inspectorate of Prisons. In a thematic report on separation in young offender institutions (YOIs) in England and Wales, the Chief Inspector of Prisons Peter Clarke said many children in YOIs are “effectively held in harmful solitary confinement”, with poor conditions and potential damage to mental health. He recommended an “entirely new approach” to separation be implemented that “enables managers to use separation to protect children from harm and prevents separated children being subjected to impoverished regimes”.

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Looked After and Accommodated Children

Study shows ‘life-changing’ impact of mentoring scheme for care-experienced children

A study has highlighted the “life-changing” impact of a mentoring project for care-experienced young people in Scotland. MCR Pathways was developed to support care-experienced and disadvantaged young people in Glasgow to improve their school attendance and participation, educational attainment and post-school positive destinations. An evaluation carried out by ScotCen found that care-experienced young people in Glasgow have experienced a number of educational improvements as a result of their participation in the project. The report suggests that MCR mentors “help young people to develop their study skills, increase their confidence, manage their stress and develop goals and aspirations”, adding that “to be mentored through MCR is a life-changing experience on a number of levels”.

Charity calls for minimum fostering allowance to address ‘postcode lottery’

Foster carers in Scotland are subject to a ‘postcode lottery’ in relation to their payments and a national minimum fostering allowance should be introduced, according to the Fostering Network. According to the charity’s research, the amount foster carers receive to spend on 0 - 4 year olds in their care can vary by as much as £6,000 a year between local authorities. It was also found that 30 of the 32 local authorities provide an allowance below the Welsh national minimum allowance for at least one age group, while two-thirds of local authorities have not increased their allowances in two years. The Fostering Network has highlighted that Scotland is the only country in the UK that does not have a national minimum fostering allowance.

Care Day taking place on 21 February

This year’s Care Day takes place on Friday 21 February. The event is an annual international celebration of the care-experienced community. Who Cares? Scotland is encouraging the care-experienced community and its supporters to get involved and to “reimagine how Scotland and the world can best support Care Experienced people to flourish”.

Workforce

New figures on staff vacancies in care services published

New figures on the levels of staff vacancies in Scotland’s social care services have been published by the Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Social Services Council. Among the key findings, 38% of services reported having vacancies at 31 December 2018. This was unchanged from the proportion of services with vacancies at 31 December 2017 and an increase of 2% from 2016 (36%). Daycare of children and adoption services were significantly below the national average for all care services reporting vacancies. The proportion of services with vacancies in care homes for children and young people decreased from 45% in 2017 to 41% in 2018. The proportion of residential special school accommodation services (73%) reporting
vacancies was significantly above the national average for all care services. Vacancies in secure accommodation services decreased; dropping to 60% from 80% in 2017. The proportion of daycare of children services with vacancies remained unchanged from 2017 at 23%. Fostering services reported a decrease in the proportion of reported vacancies; down to 39% from 45% in 2017, while adoption services with vacancies continued to decrease from 28% to 22% of services.

SSSC sets out new features for Open Badges scheme

Several new features to be rolled out for the Open Badges scheme have been set out by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). A number of new features are being introduced for the learning and development programme over the next 12 months, including a smartphone app, a new focus on peer assessment and a requirement for mandatory endorsement for more badges.

Other Health and Social Care

Petition to reduce social work powers opened

The Public Petitions Committee has opened petition PE01785 on reviewing and reducing social work powers. The petitioner has suggested these powers are currently being abused and has asked for review in relation to employability, guardianship orders, care, contact, volunteer panel members and education. Closing date for the online petition is 20 February 2020.

Guidance on integration directions published

Guidance setting out how to improve practice in the issuing and implementation of directions issued by integration authorities to health boards and local authorities has been published by the Scottish Government. Directions are the means by which an integrated joint board (IJB) tells health boards and local authorities what is to be delivered using the integrated budget and for the IJB to improve the quality and sustainability of care, as outlined in its strategic commissioning plan.

Herald reports concerns over Children’s Hearings System complaints processes

Concerns about how the Children’s Hearings System deals with complaints about panel volunteers have been highlighted by The Herald. A number of senior members have outlined concerns about the way they and colleagues have been treated in relation to Children’s Hearings Scotland’s complaints process. The organisation responded to the reports, stating that it investigates all complaints “thoroughly using a fair and robust procedure”.

Latest edition of Improving Care published

The latest edition of Improving Care has been published by the Care Inspectorate Improving Care 2019/20 is a guide to who we are and what we do, including updates on our inspections, our new resources and good news stories from care services.
**Scottish Government updates on homelessness figures**

A bi-annual bulletin update on homelessness has been published by the Scottish Government. According to the report, in the period from 1 April to 30 September 2019 the number of children in temporary accommodation (7,252) had increased on a national level by 6% compared to September 2018.

**Potential social and equality impacts of Brexit**

The Scottish Government has published an independent report on the social and equality impacts of Brexit, which looks at what effect the UK’s decision to leave the EU may have on the legal rights and protections of individuals and groups in Scotland. Issues touched upon include arrangements between the UK and the EU for unaccompanied children seeking asylum, as well as children in care whose guardians may not be aware of the need to register with EU Settlement Scheme.

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**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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