Minutes from a recent meeting of the National Child Protection Leadership Group have been published by the Scottish Government. Attendees at the September 2019 meeting included Peter Macleod, who informed the group that the Care Inspectorate had established a short-term working group to develop proposals around case review and significant case review learning.

Draft regulations setting out how devolved powers will make “meaningful changes” to disability benefits for children and young people have been published by the Scottish Government. The Government will extend the upper age limit for assistance to the age of 18, while Child Winter Heating Assistance, worth £200 to families with the most seriously disabled children, will be provided to help with fuel costs. It is expected these changes will be implemented by summer 2020.
Early Learning and Childcare

New Flexible Pathway resource launched to support parents and providers

A new early learning and childcare (ELC) management system designed to provide a ‘route to flexible childcare’ for parents has been launched. The charity Flexible Childcare Services Scotland offers a service giving parents the opportunity to book day care by the hour, paying for the time they book. The Flexible Pathway is designed to enabled ELC providers to be more flexible and efficient in their booking and staff management.

SCMA launches new webpage on funded ELC

A new webpage on funded ELC has been launched by the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA). Designed for childminders and parents alike, the page provides a range of tools, resources and information relating to funded ELC.

SCMA welcomes Scottish Government response to ELC audit

The SCMA has welcomed a response from the Scottish Government to the childminding body’s latest ELC audit. The 2019 audit made several recommendations aimed at accelerating the inclusion of childminders in ELC delivery. The SCMA welcomed the “commitment to fund vital three-way research into [declining workforce trends], to be undertaken jointly and collaboratively by the Scottish Government, SCMA and the Care Inspectorate”.

Industry report suggests childcare market consolidation likely to continue in 2020

Large corporate childcare operators are likely to continue to expand in 2020, according to a report by childcare business broker Redwoods Dowling Kerr (RDK). In its latest Global Childcare Property Report, RDK said the childcare industry “is witnessing a rapid rate of consolidation by corporate operators”, citing significant growth by organisations such as Kids Planet and Bertram in 2019. The report suggests consolidation of the market is likely to increase over the next year.

Report calls for action to address early years workforce challenges

Greater professionalisation and attaching more value to early years roles would help address challenges recruiting, retaining and developing staff in childcare, according to a new report. According to research by the National Centre for Social Research and the Education Policy Institute, many staff who initially pursue a career in early years leave due to low pay, lack of recognition and the demands of the job. The report makes several recommendations, focusing on professional development, professionalisation and the value associated with the early years sector.

Radio programme looks at free early years education

A BBC radio programme exploring the issue of free early years education is available to download. The Analysis episode, titled The Early Years Miracle? looks at
the evidence around free early years education and “the theory that it is good for children, their parents and society”.

Education

Charity study finds 14% of 7 to 9 year olds living in ‘literacy poverty’

Almost a quarter of children between the ages of 7 and 9 in the UK receive less than 15 minutes of shared reading a week, according to a study by the BookTrust. The charity found that 345,000 (or 14%) of children aged 7 to 9 are in ‘literacy poverty’, meaning that they are read to or with, for pleasure, for less than 15 minutes a week outside of school. A further 17% are read to or with for less than half an hour a week, while 6% are never read to or with by parents or guardians at all. The BookTrust encourages families to read together for 10 minutes a day, citing many benefits.

Health

RCN paper explores role of Community Children’s Nursing across the UK

A paper exploring the role of Community Children’s Nursing (CCN) across the UK has been published by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN). The publication defines the role, explores the legislative and policy agenda, sets out the core principles of providing care, considers variations across the four countries of the UK and outlines examples of current models of care and service delivery. The paper references the CCN National Review and work to explore and clarify the role in Scotland.

Young people’s peer research into health inequalities

A new peer research report from a project undertaken by young people into health inequalities in communities has been published by Children in Scotland. The participative research project engaged a group of young researchers aged 10-14 from Dalmarnock Primary School in Glasgow and Baldragon Academy in Dundee. Recommendations included: more visible responsible adults in communities; access to free or cheap fun activities; improved green spaces; and support services for children and young people.

Child health review coverage statistics published

Statistics on the coverage of child health reviews for preschool children have been published by ISD Scotland. Of children eligible for Health Visitor reviews at 10-14 days, six-eight weeks and 27-30 months, 97%, 90% and 91% were respectively recorded as having had their review in 2018-19. The newly introduced 13-15 months review was carried out for 71% of children, though it has yet to be implemented by all health boards.

Scottish Government response to social prescribing report

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport Jeane Freeman has written to the Health and Sport Committee setting out the Scottish Government’s response to the report
on ‘Social Prescribing: physical activity is an investment, not a cost.’ The letter confirms that a working group will be established to identify and communicate examples of best practice in delivery of social prescribing, and to co-produce resources for practitioners.

Justice

**CYCJ publishes findings from independent evaluation**

The Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice has published findings from an independent evaluation of its work. The evaluation was led by Catherine-Rose Stocks-Rankin to support the CYCJ in its mission to improve youth justice.

**Scoping study looks at prevention in youth justice in Scotland**

A project to support a shift to earlier support for children involved in offending, or at risk of negative outcomes, has published its first scoping study. The Inclusion as Prevention project, in which the CYCJ is a core partner, conducted informal interviews for an initial study to gain an understanding of the picture of prevention in youth justice across Scotland. IAP is operating in South Lanarkshire, focusing specifically in years two and three on the areas of Rutherglen and Cambuslang.

**Looked After and Accommodated Children**

**Consultation on proposed reforms to unregulated care provision (England)**

A consultation on proposed reforms to unregulated provision for children in care and care leavers has been launched by the UK Government. Proposals include: banning using independent and semi-independent provision for under 16s; introducing national quality standards; ensuring Independent Reviewing Officers represent young people’s interests; requiring local authorities and policy forces to liaise; and new legal powers for Ofsted to take action against illegal providers.

**Mental Health**

**Girls more likely to face emotional problems in early adolescence, study finds**

Girls are more likely than boys to face emotional problems in early adolescence, according to research highlighted by Children and Young People Now. Analysis of more than 10,000 children, conducted for HeadStart, found that emotional difficulties for girls increased by 17% between the ages of 11 and 14, while for boys of the same age, emotional problems decreased by 5% in their early teens.

**Other Health and Social Care**

**Proposed spending plans for 2020-21 set out by the Scottish Government**

The Scottish Government has published its spending plans for 2020 to 2021. Finance Minister Kate Forbes set out the proposed Budget in the Scottish Parliament.
after Derek Mackay stood down as Finance Secretary. Ms Forbes pointed out that the statement comes in the context of a deferred budget announcement by the UK Government, meaning that the plans have been developed based on best estimates and without fiscal certainty. The proposed Budget includes:

- funding of over £15bn for the Health and Sport portfolio, including pooled investment of £9.4bn for health and social care partnerships and an increase of £100m funding to £811m to support social care and integration
- rollout of the Child Payment
- around £645m investment for the expansion of early learning and childcare (ELC) to 1,140 hours from August 2020
- additional resource to the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland to help funded providers meet the new National Standard for ELC.

**Literature review of child contact enforcement in other jurisdictions**

A review of published literature on the enforcement of child contacts in international jurisdictions has been published by the Scottish Government. The paper, prepared to support the work of the Children (Scotland) Bill and the Family Justice Modernisation Strategy, concludes that the majority of courts across international jurisdictions are empowered to impose a variety of different interventions and sanctions in response to breach of contact orders. However, in practice courts defer to a limited range of options, depending on the reasons behind the breach of order.

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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, current research and policy development. We use a variety of sources, including alerts from Newsdirect, Community Care, Children & Young People Now and ISD Scotland.

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