



[COVID-19 – General](#)

[Child Protection](#)

[Early Learning and  
Childcare](#)

[Human Rights](#)

[Justice](#)

[Mental Health](#)

[Other Health and Social  
Care](#)

[Other](#)

**COVID-19 – General**

[Confirmation highest level of restrictions will be eased](#)

The Scottish Government has confirmed that 11 local authority areas in the highest level of COVID-19 restrictions will move down a level from 4 to 3 on Friday 11 December 2020.

[Update to guidance on running organised activities](#)

The Scottish Government has published an update to the guidance on the safe running of organised activities for children and young people. This guidance is for organised unregulated activities and services provided indoors and outdoors for children and young people, including babies and toddlers, that are voluntary, third sector, parent or peer led or unregulated providers delivering a service or activity directly to children under 18, and has been updated to reflect current guidance.

[Joint letter on supporting Allied Healthcare Professions](#)

The four Chief Allied Healthcare Professions Advisors, Chief Officer of the Health and Care Professions Council and the Chief Officer of the General Osteopathic Council have issued a joint letter on supporting Allied Healthcare Professions in COVID-19 letter.



## **Child Protection**

### [Use of private messaging services \(England\)](#)

The Children's Commissioner for England has published a report into children's use of private messaging services like Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger, reportedly showing that children are using messaging services they are not old enough to be accessing and warning that the privacy of direct messaging and use of end-to-end encryption could put more children at risk of grooming and exploitation. The Commissioner states that end-to-end encryption makes it impossible for the platform itself to read the contents of messages, and risks preventing police and prosecutors from gathering the evidence they need to prosecute perpetrators of child sexual exploitation and abuse.

## **Early Learning and Childcare**

### [Learning from early years family support partnership project](#)

Children in Scotland has made a film about the learning and recommendations from their Open Kindergartens early years family support project, which involves parents, carers and their young children meeting regularly in family centres and supported by trained early years staff and specialists who develop parents' skills, confidence and knowledge.

## **Human Rights**

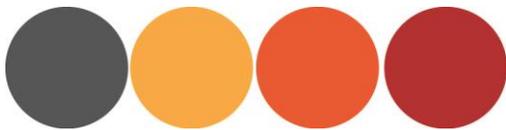
### [Children's rights in Scotland](#)

A report has been submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of Child by the Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights (Together), highlighting key issues for children's rights in Scotland and aiming to inform the initial stages of the UK's next review by the Committee. Key issues include barriers in accessing justice, gaps in data collection, tokenistic or missed efforts to engage children in decision-making, inappropriate use of restraint, and increasing child poverty and widening health inequalities.

## **Justice**

### [Analysis of consultation on raising the age of referral](#)

The Scottish Government has published an independent analysis of responses to the public consultation on raising the age at which children can be referred to the Children's Reporter. The analysis shows an overwhelming support to raise the maximum age of referral, with most indicating the age should be raised to 18 for care, protection and offence cases. The importance of harmonising definitions of a 'child' in legislation is also a central feature of supportive responses.



### [Key rights in a Children's Hearing](#)

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration has produced a short cartoon strip aimed at children covering some of the key rights in a Children's Hearing. The cartoon states that children have a right to share their views, bring an advocacy worker and/or lawyer, ask to speak to the Panel on their own, ask for a review Hearing, and appeal against the decision.

### [Broadening access to support for survivors of violence against women and girls](#)

The Scottish Government has announced funding for organisations to help broaden access to support survivors and tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG). The Delivering Equally Safe Fund aims to prioritise funding for frontline organisations and projects that are developing a person centred approach, supporting disabled survivors and working with those in remote or island communities.

## **Mental Health**

### [Partners working together to help children with mental ill health \(England\)](#)

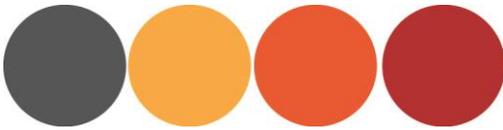
Ofsted, Care Quality Commission (CQC), HMI Constabulary, Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and HMI Probation have published a joint report looking at how partners in six local authority areas are working together to help children with mental ill health. The report finds that restructures of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), along with a concerted effort by agencies to work together, has broadened the help available for a range of mental health needs. But although there has been progress, some agencies need to get better at identifying children suffering from mental ill health, and too often a child's mental health problem is first picked up when they enter the youth justice system.

## **Other Health and Social Care**

### [Staff vacancies in care services](#)

The Care Inspectorate and Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) have published data on vacancies reported by care services as at 31 December 2019, showing the number of registered care services with a vacancy and the number of actual vacancies that services say they had using whole time equivalent (WTE) data. Key findings include:

- at 31 December 2019, 39% of services reported having vacancies, an increase of 1 percentage point from the proportion of services with vacancies at 31 December 2018 and 2017 (both 38%)
- daycare of children services were significantly below the national average for all care services reporting vacancies
- at 31 December 2019, the rate of WTE vacancies for all services in Scotland was 6.2%, up from 5.5% in 2018



- at 31 December 2019, 49% of services with vacancies reported having problems filling them; up 2 percentage points from the previous year

#### [Annual returns available from January](#)

The Care Inspectorate's annual returns will be available to service providers for completion between 18 January and 28 February 2021. This is slightly later than usual to allow time to prepare for the next phase of the registration digital app which we aim to launch in January.

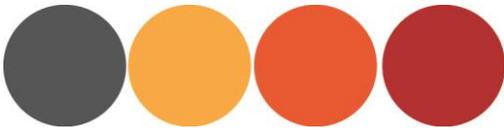
#### **Other**

#### [Pilot areas for payment of Child Disability benefit](#)

The Scottish Government has announced that three local authorities will be pilot areas for the new Child Disability Payment for families of children with a disability or long term health condition. From summer 2021, families in Dundee City, Perth and Kinross and the Western Isles will be able to apply for the benefit which will provide money to help with the extra care and mobility costs children and young people with a disability may have, up to the age of 18.

#### [Annual report on Fairer Scotland Action Plan](#)

The Scottish Government has published the Fairer Scotland Action Plan Progress Report for 2020, detailing the achievements and ongoing work in relation to the Fairer Scotland Action Plan, published in 2016, and an update on the actions taken in relation to two reports published by the Independent Poverty and Inequality Advisor, *Shifting the Curve* and *the Life Chances of Young People in Scotland*.



## 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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