



Covid-19 – General

[Employees urged to work from home amid rising Omicron cases](#)

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has called for employers to enable any employee who worked from home at the outset of the pandemic to do so again, until at least mid-January, amid concern over rising Omicron case rates. In a statement to Parliament, the First Minister confirmed that case numbers of the new variant had risen from 9 to 99 in a week. She highlighted data that suggested Omicron was more transmissible than the Delta variant and urged people to take a lateral flow test before socialising with others.

[Flexibility to Covid certification scheme introduced](#)

The Scottish Government has announced that from Monday 6 December, the Covid certification scheme will include provision for a negative test for Covid-19, as an alternative to proof of vaccination. It is also working with local partners including local authorities and transport partners to further expand the availability of free lateral flow tests and identify further sites for them to be picked up, including shopping centres, supermarkets, garden centres, sports grounds, Christmas markets and transport hubs

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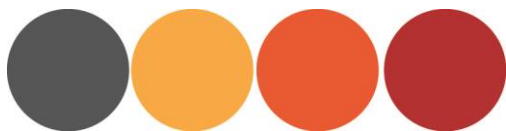
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[National study to test new Covid-19 treatments](#)

The Chief Medical Officer is encouraging people to come forward for a national study that will evaluate new antiviral treatment options for Covid-19. The PANORAMIC study, run by the University of Oxford, will prioritise those at greater risk of being severely ill if they test positive for the virus. It is open to people aged 50 and above, or 18-49 with certain underlying conditions. In addition to the study, from 16 December all people considered as extremely high risk of becoming severely ill with the virus, and who have tested positive, will be able to access a monoclonal antibody or antiviral treatment.

[Inquiry launched into excess deaths in Scotland](#)

An inquiry into the cause of excess deaths in Scotland since the start of the pandemic has been launched by the Scottish Parliament's COVID-19 Recovery Committee. Scottish Government data shows that deaths in Scotland are 11% above the average for this time of year and have been above average for the last 26 weeks. The inquiry will consider to what extent this is being caused by Covid-19, or indirect health effects of the pandemic. The call for evidence closes on 7 January 2022.

[Challenges affecting young people following pandemic school closures](#)

Barnardo's has published research into the "new normal" for Scottish children based on its work with young people in schools, surveying their schools-based practitioners in October 2021, looking at the period following children's return to school in August. Of those surveyed, 94% felt that children and young people have more worries now than before the pandemic, and 78% did not believe that children and young people have access to the appropriate supports to address their mental health needs.

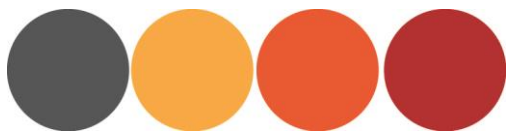
[Appeal for more vaccinators for booster jab programme](#)

The Scottish Government is appealing for more people to become vaccinators to help accelerate the national booster jab programme. Following the most recent advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) everyone aged 18 and over who is eligible will be offered a slot for the booster jab by the end of January. Currently those aged 40-49 are invited to make an appointment through the online portal or the national helpline, from 12 weeks after their second dose. The national programme is also delivering second doses to 16 and 17 years olds.

Alcohol and Drugs

[Framework for supporting families affected by substance abuse](#)

The Scottish Government has published 'Families Affected by Drug and Alcohol Use in Scotland: A Framework for Holistic Whole Family Approaches and Family Inclusive Practice', which seeks to provide a framework, in line with the national drug/alcohol strategy Rights, Respect and Recovery (RRR) and linked policy



initiatives for the development of a consistent approach for families affected by substance use.

Child Protection

[Child abuse images recorded by UK police](#)

The NSPCC has published the results from Freedom of Information requests to UK police forces which reportedly show the number of offences related to possessing, taking, making and distributing child abuse material peaked at 25,281 last year (2020/21). The NSPCC are calling for the Online Safety Bill to be significantly strengthened to prevent the production and spread of child abuse material on social media.

[Next phase of abuse inquiry to hear evidence relating to children in foster care](#)

The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry will begin hearing evidence relating to Phase 7 of its investigations into the abuse of children in foster care. This evidence will include children who were boarded out, as well as children who were placed in foster care by a Scottish local authority. The first part of the case study will feature evidence from relevant experts and regulatory bodies to provide context and scene setting. The Inquiry will then hear evidence from individuals who experienced abuse in foster care as well as a range of other witnesses.

Disabilities

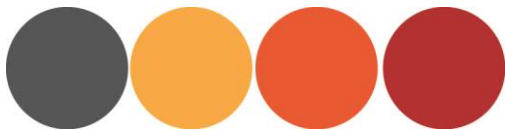
[Final proposal for transitions Bill lodged](#)

The Proposed Children and Young People Transitions to Adulthood (Scotland) Bill has now been lodged as a Member's Bill, after Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP received support from the required number of MSPs. The bill would require the Scottish Ministers to introduce, and to implement, a statutory National Transitions Strategy to improve outcomes for disabled children and young people in the transition to adulthood; to require the Scottish Ministers to assign to a member of the Scottish Government, or to a junior Scottish Minister, special responsibility in relation to the exercise of their functions under the legislation; and to require local authorities to introduce a transitions plan for each disabled child and young person to ensure that each disabled child and young person receives appropriate care and support before, and during, the transition to adulthood.

Early Learning and Childcare

[Case studies sought for projects linking older people and children through play](#)

Play Scotland and Generations Working Together are seeking case studies of projects that link older people and children through play and storytelling. These case studies are sought for a toolkit resource, and everyone who submits a case study will be invited to the launch event and will receive a free copy of the toolkit.



Justice

[Spotlight on data function in the Children's Hearings System](#)

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) has published the latest in their Spotlight series on the data function providing information around the Children's Hearings System. SCRA's Data Manager explains the data function, what data SCRA holds and what they do with that data.

[Catherine Dyer appointed Chair of Community Justice Scotland](#)

The appointment of Catherine Dyer as Chair of Community Justice Scotland has been confirmed by Justice Secretary Keith Brown. Ms Dyer is a lawyer with extensive experience of public sector policy, strategy, delivery and leadership and was the first woman to be appointed as Crown Agent for Scotland acting as Chief Executive of the Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service.

Looked after and Accommodated Children

[National report on corporate parenting](#)

The Scottish Government has published the second national report on corporate parenting, providing an overview of corporate parents' activities over the last three years, and how they have delivered their duties to support children and young people with care experience. A 'Review of Corporate Parenting Plans 2018-2021' has also been published.

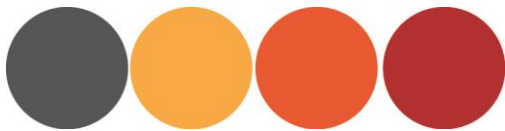
Mental Health

[Results of survey into mental wellbeing of secondary school pupils](#)

The Scottish Government has published a report outlining findings Ipsos MORI's Young People in Scotland (YPIS) 2021 survey of pupils from secondary local authority schools, with answers to questions about mental wellbeing, relationships and social media use.

[Report into children and young people's mental health \(England\)](#)

The UK Parliament's Health & Social Care Committee has published a report on children and young people's mental health. The report acknowledges that the mental health of children and young people has worsened in the pandemic, and calls for setting up a Cabinet sub-committee to bring together different departments to act together to promote good mental health and prevent new crises emerging.



Other Health and Social Care

[Staff vacancies in care services](#)

The Care Inspectorate and Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) have published 'Staff vacancies in care services 2020', providing a national overview of vacancy levels reported by care services registered with the Care Inspectorate. At 31 December 2020, 36% of services reported having vacancies, a fall of three percentage points in the last year.

[SSSC seeking volunteers for communications review](#)

The SSSC has announced it is seeking volunteers from different parts of the Register to take part in a project to review its communications during December and January. Volunteers will be sent examples of fitness to practise letters and emails, before being asked to answer a few questions. For example, are they easy to read, do you know what action to take and is there enough information. Volunteers can sign up via an [online form](#).

[SSSC annual report published](#)

The SSSC has published its annual report for 2020-21, the first in its 2020-2023 strategy. Key points in the report include the creation of a Temporary Social Work Register to increase capacity during the pandemic and the conclusion of registration of the last category of care workers. The report also notes partnership with NHS Education for Scotland (NES) which produced guidance for employers, and work with the **Care Inspectorate** to map and meet staffing demands.

[Scottish Government publishes proposed Budget for 2022-23](#)

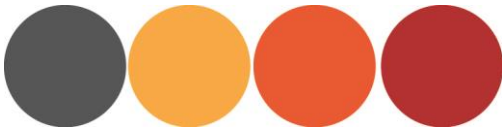
Finance Secretary Kate Forbes has delivered a statement on the Scottish Government's proposed Budget for 2022/23. Ms Forbes said the budget was "transitional", focusing at Covid recovery as well as looking to the future. Proposals include: record funding of £18bn for health and social care, including £1.6bn for integration; a minimum hourly rate of £10.50 for staff within adult social care; a £50m Whole Family Wellbeing Fund; £544m to support the delivery of funded ELC for eligible children; and a [public sector pay policy](#) focused on those on low incomes.

[Revised model code of conduct for board members](#)

A revised model code of conduct for board members of devolved public bodies has been published by the Scottish Government. The code is issued as required by the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 and sets out the conduct expected of those who serve on the boards of public bodies in Scotland.

[Ofsted Annual Report \(England\)](#)

Ofsted has published their Annual Report for 2021 looking at schools, early years, further education and skills and children's social care for the academic year 2020 to



2021. Ofsted's findings are based on inspection evidence from inspections of, and visits to, schools, colleges and providers of social care, early years and further education and skills.

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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