



Covid-19 – General

[Covid alert level increases](#)

The UK Government's Department of Health and Social Care has confirmed, following advice from the UK Health Security Agency and in the light of the rapid increase in Omicron cases, that the UK Covid alert level should increase from Level 3 to Level 4.

[Additional measures to slow spread of Covid](#)

The Scottish Government has confirmed that new guidance and measures will take effect from midnight on Friday 17 December to “stem the flow of transmission, keep businesses and services open, and protect against pressure on health services.” The additional measures include guidance on reducing social interaction at home or in indoor public places to a maximum of three households, and updated guidance for visiting care homes – with no more than two households to visit a resident at a time. [Guidance for businesses](#) has been published.

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[Announcement of Chair for public inquiry into pandemic](#)

In a ministerial statement to the Scottish Parliament, Deputy First Minister John Swinney has announced that Lady Poole QC, Senator of the College of Justice of Scotland, will chair the public inquiry into the handling of Covid in Scotland. Terms of reference for the inquiry will cover 12 areas of investigation, each covering a strategic element of the pandemic, from outbreak management to the transfer of residents to or from homes, treatment and care of residents, restrictions on visiting, infection prevention and control, and inspections. The aim of the inquiry is to learn lessons from the response and to provide recommendations as soon as practicable.

[Chair of UK Covid-19 inquiry](#)

The Prime Minister Boris Johnson has announced the Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett DBE as the Chair of the forthcoming public inquiry into the Covid-19 pandemic. The Inquiry, set to begin its work in spring 2022, will be established under the Inquiries Act 2005, and there will be consultation with the devolved administrations on the terms of reference for the Inquiry. Once the terms of reference have been published in draft, Baroness Hallett will take forward a process of public engagement and consultation - including with bereaved families and other affected groups - before the terms of reference are finalised.

[Omicron evidence paper](#)

The Scottish Government has published an evidence paper on the Omicron variant in Scotland. The paper covers what we know about Omicron, how to identify it, how it might grow, and implications of the current situation.

Early Learning and Childcare

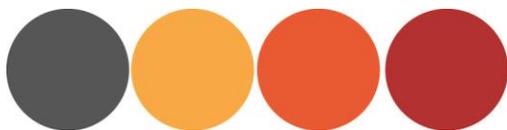
[Effect of the pandemic on children and approaches by education providers \(England\)](#)

Ofsted has published the first three reports in a new series looking at the effects of the pandemic on children and students' learning and personal development, and the approaches education providers are using to help them catch up. In relation to early years provision, many childcare providers reported that young children are behind with their communication, language and social skills, as well as their physical development, and child carers told inspectors that they are focusing on developing children's communication and language skills; providing more opportunities for children to interact with each other to build on their social and emotional skills; and helping their physical development – particularly for those who did not have access to outdoor space during lockdowns – by adapting their outside play areas.

Human Rights

[New Rights Challenge Scouts badge](#)

The Children & Young People's Commissioner Scotland and Scouts Scotland are jointly launching a new Rights Challenge badge, featuring a range of activities and



resources to raise Scouts' understanding of their rights and about incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots law. The badge will also promote adult leaders' awareness of children's rights.

Justice

[Places of safety for when a child is involved in a serious incident](#)

The Scottish Government has published a list of places of safety which may be used by police where a child under the age of 12 is involved in a serious incident, as required by the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019.

Looked after and Accommodated Children

[Standards for supported accommodation and end of unregulated provision \(England\)](#)

The UK Government has announced the introduction of mandatory national standards for supported accommodation housing 16 and 17-year-olds and a programme of Ofsted-led registration and inspection. It is also confirmed that whilst the new accountability framework is developed by Ofsted, local authorities will continue to be held to account by Ofsted where they do not meet their duty to provide safe, secure placements where children are not placed at risk – including in supported accommodation for 16 and 17-year-olds. The standards will focus on improving leadership and management, protection, accommodation and support, with a focus on identifying risk, fostering healthy relationships between staff and the young people in their care, and giving young people more say in the support they receive.

Other Health and Social Care

[ALLIANCE Chief Executive announces he is stepping down](#)

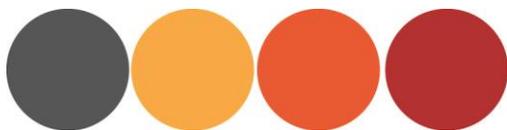
Professor Ian Welsh OBE has announced that he will be stepping down as the ALLIANCE's Chief Executive. During his time as Chief Executive Ian has been committed to the ALLIANCE vision for people of all ages who are disabled or living with long term conditions, and unpaid carers, to have a strong voice and enjoy their right to live well with support and services that put them at the centre.

[Appointment of Chief Nursing Officer](#)

The Royal College of Nursing are welcoming the appointment of Professor Alex McMahon as Scotland's Chief Nursing Officer (CNO).

[First Cross-party Group on Social Work](#)

Iriss are highlighting that the the Scottish Parliament's first Cross-Party Group on Social Work has received formal recognition, with its purpose to promote understanding of the complexities of the social work profession, bring together its voice and positively raise its profile. The first meeting will take place on the 12



January, 6-7.45pm. The topic will be 'Perspectives of Social Work' to hear directly from people with experience of using services and experience of delivering social work services.

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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