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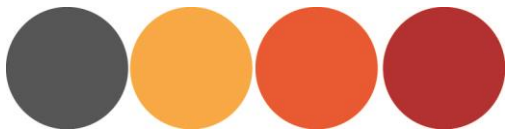
Child Protection

[New report on incorrect determination of age among child refugees](#)

A report on the Home Office's "incorrect determination" of age and its impact on child refugees has been published by the Refugee Council. The report, produced jointly with the Helen Bamber Foundation and Humans for Rights Network, sets out evidence arguing the Home Office "improperly" treats large numbers of children seeking asylum as adults upon arrival in the UK. According to the report, between January 2022 to June 2023 more than 1,300 children were wrongly assessed to be adults by the Home Office. In this period, the Humans for Rights Network recorded 832 safeguarding episodes where there were strong reasons to believe that a child was sharing accommodation with an unrelated adult, while there were 15 cases where children wrongly treated as adults were criminalised. The report also suggests the situation could worsen under the recently enacted Illegal Migration Act.

[Papers from research on young refugees in Scotland and elsewhere](#)

Two new papers have been published as part of a three-year research project working with groups of young refugees in Scotland, Finland, Norway to examine how they draw and describe their networks and relationships. The papers, part of the Drawing Together project, explore the role of family-like relationships for the wellbeing of unaccompanied child refugees in Europe and how meaningful objects can tell stories of



young refugees' past, present and future. The Centre for excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS) provides research support to the project's Scottish team and is a co-author of the papers.

[Encouraging or assisting another person to self-harm now a crime](#)

A new offence making it a crime to encourage or assist another person to self-harm has come into effect, the Scottish Government has highlighted. The offence, established under the Online Safety Act 2023, can be committed online, in correspondence or publications, or in-person and applies regardless of whether an individual goes on to injure themselves or not. Anyone found guilty of the crime can face up to five years in prison.

[Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel publishes annual report \(England\)](#)

The body established to oversee and improve child safeguarding practice in England has published its annual report, identifying patterns in practice and key messages from its 2023/24 programme. The report sets out the findings of two national reviews, looks at the nature of serious incident notifications/rapid reviews and identifies a number of practice themes to make a difference in reducing serious harm and preventing child deaths caused by abuse and neglect.

Early Learning and Childcare

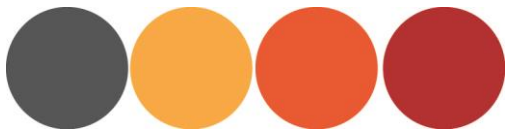
[New Childsmile practice note for ELC settings](#)

A new practice note to support improving children's dental health and oral hygiene in early learning and childcare (ELC) settings has been published by the Care Inspectorate. Supporting health smiles has been produced in collaboration with Childsmile and is designed to act as a tool to prompt reflection and develop approaches to toothbrushing, supporting good oral hygiene throughout life. Childsmile is a national programme delivered in nursery and primary school to improve the oral health of children in Scotland and reduce inequalities both in dental health and access to dental services. The programme delivers a range of preventive

Infection Prevention and Control

[PHS encourages MMR uptake following confirmed measles cases](#)

Public Health Scotland (PHS) is encouraging the public to take up the offer of the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine following confirmation of two cases in Scotland since October 2023. Anyone who has not had two doses of the free MMR vaccine, as well as parents and carers of children who have missed a dose, is encouraged to visit the NHS Inform website to find out how to arrange an appointment in their local health board area. According to PHS, uptake of MMR has declined across all UK nations in recent years and there remains a risk of infection in those who are not vaccinated or not fully vaccinated for their age.



- There have been 347 laboratory confirmed measles cases reported in England since 1 October 2023, with 127 of these cases confirmed in January 2024, according to figures from the [UK Health Security Agency](#). 67% of these are in children under the age of 10 and 24% in young people aged over 15.

Looked After and Accommodated Children

[Minister writes to committee on Promise delivery progress](#)

The Minister for Children, Young People and Keeping the Promise has written to a parliamentary committee in relation to progress towards achieving the Promise. The Education, Children and Young People Committee had written to Natalie Don seeking reflections on a range of topics. Ms Don highlights specific actions, including investment in allowances for kinship and foster carers, the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill, consultation on the care leaver payment, and progress on the Bairns' Hoose pilots. Other issues covered include: workforce; early intervention; exclusions; change and sequencing; premature deaths; sibling contact; the Paving the Way Report; priorities.

Mental Health

[NSPCC survey explores parents' concerns about children's mental wellbeing](#)

Three in four UK parents with children under five are anxious about their child's emotional and mental wellbeing, according to a survey for the NSPCC. The survey, which took in the views of 2,016 parents, also found: more than two thirds (67%) cited learning development as a cause for concern; for parents of six to 11-year-olds, 56% said they were anxious about their child's mental health; 47% of parents of children between 12 - 17 expressed the same concern; more than twice as many parents think growing up is harder for girls than boys.

Play

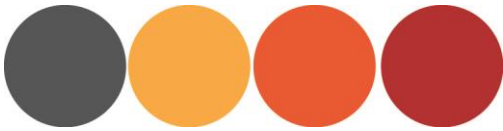
[Free webinar on new international standard and play – 29 February](#)

Play Scotland is to host a free webinar on a new international standard (ISO) on risk management and how it relates to children's play. Organised by the UK Play Safety Forum and taking place on 29 February, the webinar brings together a number of speakers, including Tim Gill, to introduce the ISO and how to put it into practice to ensure the benefits of play.

Social Work

[Research on Justice Social Work and the National Care Service published](#)

The Scottish Government has published a report summarising research exploring the views of Justice Social Work (JSW) staff, partners and people experiencing the justice system about its strengths and weaknesses, and their views on potential inclusion within a future National Care Service (NCS). The research was undertaken



by IPSOS Scotland, alongside a [literature review](#) produced by Professor Beth Weaver. According to the report, participants expressed a desire for more detail on the NCS in general, and on the vision and plans for the potential inclusion of JSW specifically, raising many questions they felt had yet to be answered if ministers decide that JSW should form a part of the NCS. Particular concerns centred around: potential loss of social work values, identity and professional specialism; resourcing; impact on joint working.

[NCB publishes analysis of 3.6m social work assessments \(England\)](#)

The National Children's Bureau (NCB) has published an analysis of 3.6 million social work assessments in England, identifying twelve common categories of demand and the intervention pathways and outcomes associated with these. According to the study, conducted by the NCB, Kingston University and the University of Sheffield, caseloads have grown increasingly complex since 2014 (the study goes up to 2021). The steepest rise in demand concerned child mental health as a single factor but there was a disproportionate growth in cases involving multiple risk factors, including cases where children faced risks both inside and outside the home.

Other Health and Social Care

[SSSC publishes new fitness to practise data report](#)

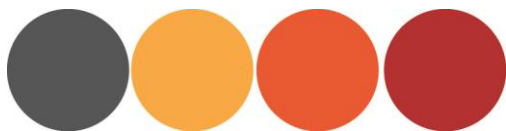
A new report providing fitness to practise data has been published by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). The report shows the SSSC received 2,674 referrals between 1 April and 31 October 2023 and on average investigates 1.1% of registrants each year. It takes on average 5.4 months to close a fitness to practise referral, with most referrals made by employers. The most frequent type of behaviour investigated is inappropriate behaviour at work. Most fitness to practise referrals received end in no further action.

[Projects to address child poverty and inequality allocated funding](#)

A number of initiatives intended to support those on low incomes and tackle child poverty have been allocated funding by the Scottish Government. There are nine successful applicants to the Child Poverty Practice Accelerator Fund, which was set up to explore promising approaches or redesign services to maximise their impact on child poverty. The Cash First Fund, which aims to reduce the need for

[Report evaluates first year of Whole Family Wellbeing Funding](#)

A report evaluating the first year of Whole Family Wellbeing Funding (WFWF) has been published by the Scottish Government. The Government committed £500m towards delivering WFWF over the course of this Parliament, aiming to transform the way family support is delivered so families can get access to the help they need. The evaluation focuses on two elements: funding provided to Children's Services Planning Partnerships (CSPPs) to support the scale up and delivery of holistic whole family support, and support to build local capacity for transformational system change in how families are supported. According to the report, there is positive



evidence that across most CSPPs, delivery of WFWF activity has progressed between developing an initial plan and submitting a Children's Service Plan annual report to the Scottish Government.

[Committee recommends shift from single-word inspection judgements \(England\)](#)

Development of an alternative to Ofsted's single-word judgements is among a range of recommendations made by a committee at Westminster. The Education Committee carried out an inquiry into the role of the inspectorate in schools. The Committee found that while there is widespread agreement on the importance of an accountability system and the role of an independent education inspectorate, there are concerns around stress and anxiety experienced by school staff in relation to inspections. The report makes a number of recommendations, including development of "an alternative to the single-word judgements that better captures the complex nature of a school's performance".

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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