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## Covid-19

### [UK Covid Inquiry to open fourth investigation](#)

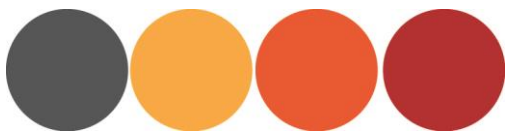
The UK Covid-19 Inquiry has confirmed that the fourth investigation, Module 4, will open the week of 14 January, examining vaccines, therapeutics and anti-viral treatment across the UK. The Chair will also be working on the Inquiry's second report, focused on core UK decision-making and political governance, which she hopes will be published in autumn 2025.

### [Scottish Covid Inquiry accepting requests to attend final impact hearings](#)

The Scottish Covid-19 Inquiry is now accepting requests to attend the preliminary hearing for its final tranche of impact hearings. The Inquiry is adopting a thematic approach to this final tranche of impact hearings, and after the preliminary hearing on 22 January, it will hold hearings investigating the impact of Covid-19 in Scotland on the following themes:

- Justice, from 18 to 28 February;
- Worship and Life Events, from 29 April to 2 May
- Equalities and Human Rights, from 10 to 20 June

The Scottish Covid-19 Inquiry has also published [further academic research](#) relating to its education and certification investigative portfolio, with a comparative study of approaches to the closure and reopening of schools in Scotland and various comparator countries during the pandemic.



## **Disability**

### [Research on tackling loneliness for young disabled people \(England\)](#)

The UK Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport has published a research report, 'Qualitative research exploring how and why young disabled people experience loneliness and what could be done to reduce it', reports Learning Disability Today. The research reportedly shows young disabled people have varied experiences of building social connections, with the nature of their disability impacting preferences for online vs in-person communication, and high-quality relationships being more important than the quantity of connections in contributing to overall satisfaction. Health challenges can limit opportunities for social connection, which contributes to loneliness, and young people can also face negative attitudes and stigma around their disability which impacts their confidence, trust in others, and contributes to feelings of isolation. Recommendations include accessible work and volunteering opportunities to meet new people, and formal support to help build social connection or reduce loneliness is found to be most helpful when it is tailored to the individual and took a flexible and accessible approach.

## **Early Learning and Childcare**

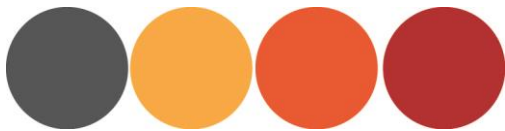
### [Self-evaluation tools and guidance for childcare agencies](#)

We have published a self-evaluation toolkit for childcare agencies introducing and supplying childcare staff, which includes guidance on undertaking self-evaluation, a worked example, example questionnaire templates, improvement plan template, and self-evaluation template. We will be in contact with providers of childcare agencies in the near future to invite you to attend a meeting to hear more about how the quality framework and self-evaluation toolkit can help support improvement.

## **Looked After and Accommodated Children**

### [Ministerial statement on secure accommodation capacity](#)

The Scottish Government's Minister for Children, Young People and Keeping the Promise, Natalie Don-Innes, gave a statement to Parliament on secure accommodation capacity. The Minister began by providing context, stating secure accommodation was a high-cost, highly-regulated part of the sector and explaining that in some cases, multiple secure accommodation beds were required for one child due to their individual needs. During the statement, the Minister addressed capacity issues at St Mary's Kenmure, advising the Chamber that an improvement notice had been served in October which triggered a pause on new admissions. She said the Scottish Government had been kept updated on the Care Inspectorate's review and that it had been right to pause admissions, although she acknowledged the impact on other providers. On wider capacity issues, the Minister spoke of the contingency plan under development by COSLA, the Care Inspectorate and Social Work Scotland, and also referenced the Care Inspectorate's update of current secure care admissions guidance to provide greater flexibility in respect of the protocol for use of the four emergency bedrooms.



### [Analysis of responses to consultation on support for young people leaving care](#)

The Scottish Government has published an [analysis of responses](#) to the consultation 'Moving On' from care into adulthood, which sought views on the various experiences of young people leaving care, including planning and preparation, Continuing Care, Aftercare, health and wellbeing support, education, employment and housing, and also considered how different groups of people leaving care may be uniquely affected by changes to the current support and services available. Overall there was consensus throughout the consultation responses on the approaches and actions required to support young people as they transition out of care into adulthood with key recurring themes including the importance of multi-agency collaboration, staff upskilling on the supports available, trauma-informed training and taking a person-centred, flexible approach to support. While there was wide support for improvements, respondents noted that without further funding and training, many of the approaches highlighted could be difficult to implement.

### [Youth Parliament works with Policy Scotland on Corporate Parenting Plan](#)

The Scottish Youth Parliament is highlighting their work with Police Scotland to assist in the key recommendations for their 2024-2027 Corporate Parenting Plan. The Scottish Youth Parliament have been engaging with care experienced young people gathering their views and experiences with Police Scotland and through a national survey and focus groups, to form key recommendations for Police Scotland's Corporate Parenting Plan which are then ranked by care experienced young people in priority. They also engaged with care experienced young people living in secure settings to get their unique perspective on Police Scotland's Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

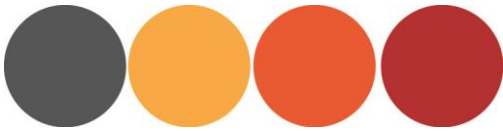
### [Event to mark five years of The Promise and present findings of a progress report](#)

The Promise Oversight Board will attend the SCVO Gathering to mark five years of The Promise and present findings from Report THREE on progress in key areas such as workplaces, whole family support and the care community's views of progress. After reflecting on where they have got to so far, Fiona Duncan, Independent Strategic Advisor, will present on what still needs to be done to be able to keep the promise by 2030.

## **Other Health and Social Care**

### [The ALLIANCE annual conference 2025 will take place on 30 April](#)

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) has announced that this year's annual conference will be held on 30 April in Glasgow. The conference will explore key issues including human rights, prevention, social care reform, and community resilience; amplifying voices that have been excluded.



## Other

### [Scottish Government's Public Service Reform programme update](#)

The Minister for Public Finance has written to the Finance and Public Administration Committee to provide an update on the progress made with the Scottish Government's public service reform (PSR) programme. The update provides detail on work to drive efficiency and effectiveness, and sets out the Government's approach to PSR. It includes examples of work which is underway in core portfolio areas such as health and social care, including prevention work to help reduce demand for health and social care services.

### [Patient Safety Commissioner role remains vacant](#)

The BBC has reported that Scotland's Patient Safety Commissioner role has still not been filled following a second round of interviews. The BBC highlights that the role will be readvertised this year following a review of the role's terms and conditions.

#### **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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