

News links from Nov/Dec 2021

New Year, New Look, New Name for the Children's Alliance

Children First is now known as **Children's Alliance** and as you may have noticed, the newsletter looks quite different, although the content will be very similar. Please visit [our new website](#) for more information.

We continue to campaign for the appointment of a **Cabinet Minister for the health and wellbeing of children and young people** and we have started a new online petition. [Please sign and share](#) the petition to promote this important campaign.

Our working groups are now well established, with the fourth launched recently to focus on "**Family and Community**". The resulting reports will provide comprehensive policy blueprints for Government action to halt and then reverse the serious damaging trends in the health and wellbeing of children and young people both pre- and post-Covid.

Mental Health

Evidence continued to mount about the continuing mental health deterioration of children and young people, and the services trying to support them, with several interesting new reports and findings. In December, the Health and Social Care Committee published a report to which the Government has two months to respond: [read the report](#).

In November, a policy briefing produced by the [University of Oxford](#), the [ESRC Centre](#) at Kings, [Emerging Minds](#), and others outlined a series of recommendations for schools, support services and policy makers. [Read more](#).

New research from the [Care Quality Commission](#) explored the mental health support provided to children and young people during the pandemic and highlighted the massive demand placed on mental health services and the widening inequalities faced by many young people. [Read more](#).

[The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition](#) (CYPMHC) called for mental health and wellbeing of all children and young people to be put at the heart of decision-making. [Read more](#).

Our Physical Health Report

Having published the first of four reports in October: "[The Health and Wellbeing of Children in the Early Years](#)", we followed up with "[The Physical Health of Children and Young People](#)" in mid-December, which shows inequality rife in many different dimensions. Please [download](#) and share the report if you haven't already done so.

And further inequality was revealed by a report from the Northern Health Service Alliance who painted a stark picture of inequality for children growing up in the north of England. [Read more](#).

Rt. Hon. Robert Halfon MP, the Conservative Chair of the Education Committee proposed that the proceeds of the so-called sugar tax could be used to fund free school breakfasts, saying that child hunger isn't a left-wing issue. [Read more](#).

Key Data on Young People

A useful resource for anyone working in youth health was published online from the [Association of Young People's Health \(AYPH\)](#), who promote evidence-based practice by making research findings more accessible. Key Data on Young People collates publicly available data gathered in the summer of 2021, and over 100 charts and infographics are available for download and use in your own work. [Read more.](#)

News from the devolved nations

Low income Scottish families are eligible for £10 weekly for children under 6, planned to be extended to under 16s next year and to be doubled over the next five years. An estimated 260,000 Scottish children live in poverty and experts predict a rise to 29% of all children by 2023, so a coalition of campaigners wrote an open letter to the Finance Minister urging her to double the payment immediately. Read a [news item](#) and [read the letter](#).

New figures showing more than a third of primary 1 youngsters in Scotland's most deprived areas are at risk of being either overweight or obese have been branded "extremely concerning" and "utterly shameful" - [read more](#).

Wales is the only UK nation with a [Future Generations Commissioner](#) and she has been advising the United Nations on the topic. As a result the UN has announced its support for a UN Special Envoy for Future Generations, a Futures Summit in 2023 and a UN Declaration for Future Generations. Scotland has promised to follow suit and the Irish Government's Foreign Minister said that the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act was inspirational and that the Irish Government would be keen to replicate it. [Read more.](#)

All Welsh primary pupils will get free school meals within three years and free childcare for two-year-olds is to be expanded. Two-year-olds in some deprived areas already qualify for 12.5 hours free childcare and the recent announcement effectively extends that to all. [Read more.](#)

From Northern Ireland we have confirmation about the worrying rise in online child sexual abuse as well as a rise in children and young people's mental health cases. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

Early Years

Research from the [Parent-Infant Foundation](#) showed that many services are not operating as they were pre-pandemic. [Read more.](#)

Official statistics on breastfeeding were published by the [Office for Health Improvement and Disparities](#). [Read more.](#)

[London Early Years Foundation](#) (LEYF) called for 30 hours of early education and care to ALL three- and four-year-olds, and not just to those from working families meeting eligibility requirements. [Read more.](#)

DfE figures show 4,000 early years providers have closed in the last two years resulting in 7,300 fewer childcare places. [Read more.](#)

Childhood Obesity

The rise in obesity in children was widely reported following data from NHS Digital that revealed almost one in seven children starts primary school obese and more than a quarter are obese by the time they finish primary school. [Read more.](#) 15 specialist clinics are to be set up in England to support obese children. [Read more.](#)

In late December both the Times and the Guardian reported on research that echoed important findings in our own aforementioned [Physical Health](#) report: specifically that our extremely unhealthy food environment thwarts any attempts to tackle the obesity crisis and unless something is done about it, plans to reduce obesity are doomed to fail. (Read more in [the Guardian](#) or [the Times](#)).

Online Abuse

The [Internet Watch Foundation](#) published new figures showing a massive increase in online child sexual abuse content: a 15-fold increase in the past decade. [Read more.](#) Five projects won funding to find practical solutions to combat abuse online. [Read more.](#)

The House of Commons Library published reaction to the Draft Online Safety Bill ([read more](#)) while MPs called for sweeping changes to tackle an industry that has become "the land of the lawless": [read more.](#)