

Policy & Parliamentary Information Digest



The Policy & Parliamentary Information Digest, exclusive to NCB members and staff, is a weekly round-up of news and new initiatives, parliamentary business, consultations, policy related documents, reports and statistics relating to children and young people. To sign up please email library@ncb.org.uk

17 August 2015

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1. News and Initiatives

Ofsted: improvement in the quality of assessment for children

A thematic survey report from Ofsted suggests that the quality of care assessments for vulnerable children and young people is improving but it found that assessments were not timely enough in about 25 per cent of cases - leaving too many children in circumstances where they were at potential risk of harm.

4 August 2015

See Documents & Reports

Kids Company statement

A government spokesperson has made a statement about Kids Company, which closed due to insolvency on 5 August.

5 August 2015

Major children's rights charities merge

Just for Kids Law, which provides direct advocacy support and legal representation for children, and the Children's Rights Alliance for England (Crae), a membership organisation that campaigns for children's rights, have announced that they are joining forces to boost their impact and save money.

6 August 2015

Two in every five London children are not school ready by age 5

Public Health England has published a report showing levels of 'school readiness' among London's children, an indicator of how prepared a child is to succeed in school cognitively, socially and emotionally.

10 August 2015

See Documents & reports

Better mental health for the young: where, when and how to target funding

Alistair Burt, Minister for Community and Social Care, discusses targeted funding for a better mental health services for young people.

12 August 2015

Ofsted publishes data for children's social care in England 2015

The data covers: inspection outcomes for local authority children's services inspections, inspection outcomes for all regulated, and other, children's social care provision, and information about the providers of children's social care, including the numbers of providers and places.

13 August 2015

See Statistics

Sex offender sentences hit record levels

Prison sentences given to sex offenders have reached record levels, with sentences averaging more than five years. As well as sentences being longer, the number of offenders convicted last year was the highest it has been in a decade.

13 August 2015

Every young person should be earning or learning from April 2017

Out of work young people between the ages of 18 and 21 will be placed on an intensive activity programme within the first three weeks of submitting a benefit claim under new

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government plans. Matt Hancock, the Paymaster General, said that young people without jobs will be sent to boot camp to prepare them for work in a no excuses approach to eradicating youth unemployment.

17 August 2015

2. Parliamentary Proceedings

Parliament rose for the summer recess on 21 July. It will return on 7 September.

3. Consultations

[Notifications of private fostering arrangements in England](#)

Department for Education

The government is consulting on plans to scrap the requirement for local authorities to report annually on private fostering arrangements. Instead it will collect data through the existing annual children in need census.

Launch date: 14 August 2015

Closing date: 15 September 2015

4. Documents and Reports

[Sure Start, what future?](#)

Labour Friends of Sure Start

This report argues that Sure Start's existence is now in serious jeopardy and it launches a campaign to save children's centres. It contains data collated by Unison that reveals 102 children's centres are either being considered for closure or have had closure plans confirmed. This follows on from news that 99 children's centres closed in the six months between 1 January and 30 June this year, bringing the total number of children's centre closures since 2010 to 250. The report includes chapters from Tristram Hunt, Labour's shadow secretary of state for education, Sharon Hodgson, Helen Berresford, director of external affairs at 4Children and Graham Allen, MP for Nottingham North, who chairs the Early Intervention Foundation. Mr Hunt says he wants to see every Labour-run council make protecting Sure Start centres in disadvantaged areas a spending priority. Ms Berresford calls for children's centres to be transformed into children and family hubs, offering wider support for families beyond early years and Mr Allen argues the economic case for investing in early intervention as a way of reducing social and health problems in later life. He says children's centres are one of the key early intervention tools.

Published 31 July 2015

[The quality of assessment for children in need of help](#)

Ofsted

This thematic survey report presents an up-to-date picture of how effectively local authorities were carrying out their assessments in early help, children in need and child protection work. Inspectors visited 10 local authorities and examined 123 cases, seeking the views of children, parents, carers and professionals from each of the authorities visited and its partner agencies. Overall they found a steady improvement in this area of work: in 63 per cent of cases reviewed, professionals were carrying out assessments promptly and in line with the right timeline for individual children and families; in the majority of cases,

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social workers were talking and listening to the child and using their views to inform their analysis in assessment; importantly, social workers were not waiting for an assessment to be complete before offering help to children and their families; inspectors reported that areas with the strongest assessment practice tended to have a stable workforce and good leadership, with a commitment to partnership working across safeguarding agencies and a culture of practitioner supervision. However, despite the progress made, there were a number of common areas that authorities inspected needed to improve to ensure assessments are consistently good: In a quarter of cases tracked, inspectors found that the assessment had not been timely enough, leaving too many children in circumstances where they were at potential risk of harm. Worryingly, in eight local authority areas, there were sometimes significant delays in being able to access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Despite the overall and steady improvement in the quality of assessment, inspectors found that 21 per cent of subsequent support plans did not clearly demonstrate the help that children and their families would receive and how the best interests of children would remain the greatest priority.

Published 4 August 2015

[Uncertain futures: a report examining the impact of removing automatic entitlement to Housing Benefit for 18 to 21 year olds](#)

YMCA England

This report advises that plans to remove automatic entitlement of the housing benefit for 18- to 21-year-olds claiming universal credit from April 2017 could leave a number of vulnerable groups of young people at risk. It argues that by removing automatic entitlement to housing benefit, the government is in danger of inadvertently taking away support from the young people who need it the most, exposing many more vulnerable people to the risk of becoming homeless and thereby damaging their prospects of finding work in the future. The report says that detailed measures should be put in place to ensure the most vulnerable young people in the country continue to receive protection and support during their time of need. As such, as a minimum, protection should be put in place for young people who are: pregnant or have dependent children; care leavers or former children in need; homeless or have a history of homelessness; estranged from their parents.

Published 4 August 2015

[The impact of adverse experiences in the home on the health of children and young people, and inequalities in prevalence and effects](#)

UCL Institute of Health Equity

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are situations which lead to an elevated risk of children and young people experiencing damaging impacts on health, or other social outcomes, across the life course. This report addresses the issue for those under the age of 18 who are abused or neglected; live in households where domestic violence, drug and alcohol misuse, mental ill health, criminality, or separation are present; or who live in care.

Published 5 August 2015

[Improving school transitions for health equity](#)

UCL Institute of Health Equity

This paper summarises the latest evidence on school transitions to determine the nature of and extent of their impact on health outcomes. It also considers whether or not school transition interventions and strategies can help to reduce health inequalities. School transitions are the moves children and young people make into, between and from schools. These times of change can be stressful and challenging periods for children, young people and their parents or carers as they worry about academic expectations, and about

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negotiating new environments and social relationships. However, school transitions can also provide important opportunities for pupils to build resilience. Resilient pupils are more able to deal with difficulties and adversities, and are therefore more likely to experience conditions which are positive for health. School transitions can therefore be both a threat and opportunity.

Published 5 August 2015

Trends in risk behaviours and negative outcomes amongst children and young people

Cabinet Office Horizon Scanning Programme Team

This brief evidence note looks at the trends in how a range of risk behaviours and negative outcomes have changed over time for children and young people. It also considers whether new risk behaviours could be emerging. It is based on desk research by the Cabinet Office Horizon Scanning Programme Team, informed by discussions with academics and colleagues across government. This paper is not a statement of government policy. A [summary](#) of the views of the academics, practitioners, policy officials and young people at a discussion chaired by Sir Mark Walport, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser on 14 October 2014 has been published separately.

Published 7 August 2015

Access all areas: messages from care leavers to a new government

Who Cares Trust

Access All Areas is a coalition of children and youth charities including Barnardo's, The Care Leavers Association, NCB and The Who Cares? Trust. This report tells the government, in young people's words, what they need as they move on from care. It calls for continued support and help with employment, training and housing beyond the current cut-off age for support which is 21. In addition to wanting support extended to the age of 25 to all care leavers regardless of whether they are in education or not, the young people questioned also want more work experience opportunities to be offered in schools and more councils to offer apprenticeships to care leavers. Access All Areas is now calling for a review into care leaver policies and a commitment to improving care leavers' lives and the opportunities available to them.

Published 7 August 2015

Improving school readiness: creating a better start for London

Public Health England

This report describes the importance of school readiness and the economic case for investing in school readiness; provides a descriptive analysis of school readiness in London; and summarises the evidence of what works to improve school readiness in order to facilitate improvements in service planning and delivery.

Published 10 August 2015

Children's independent mobility: an independent comparison and recommendations for action

Policy Studies Institute

This research reveals that parents in England are more restrictive than those in other European countries, granting their children less freedom to travel and play in their local neighbourhood unaccompanied by adults. It compares children's independent mobility in 16 countries around the world based on a survey of over 18,000 children aged seven to 15 from 2010-2012. The study found that children's independent mobility – their ability to travel and play in their local area unsupervised by adults – varies widely across the 16

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countries. Significant restrictions are placed on children in nearly all the countries surveyed, with fear of traffic the biggest factor influencing the decision to restrict children's freedom. England was ranked seventh for child independence, behind top-performing countries including Finland and Germany. Overall, Finnish parents allowed their children more freedom for almost every independent mobility indicator – for example, a majority of children aged eight are allowed to cross main roads, travel home from school and go out after dark alone. The report advises that England needs to develop its policies in order to improve children's independent mobility, and outlines seven recommendations on how to achieve this. These include reducing car dependency, adopting Daylight Saving Time to allow children to make the most of daylight hours and reduce road casualties, and putting the needs of children at the heart of urban development – cities that work for children, work for everyone.

Published 10 August 2015

[Inequalities in life expectancy: changes over time and implications for policy](#)

King's Fund

This report explores how the Marmot curve (the relationship between income deprivation and life expectancy) has changed over time and looks at the impact of other variables such as employment, housing deprivation, alcohol consumption and diet. Findings show that the gap in life expectancy narrowed from 6.9 years in 1999–2003 to 4.4 years in 2006–10. Average life expectancy across the whole of England increased during this period, but the fastest improvement was in areas with the highest levels of income deprivation.

Published 11 August 2015

[HM Inspectorate of Probation for England and Wales annual report 2014-15: independent inspection of adult and youth offending work](#)

HM Inspectorate of Probation

Transitional problems associated with recent changes to probation services under Transforming Rehabilitation have been substantial and persist, but should be resolved in time. However, it is too early to say whether the changes have had any effect on reoffending rates, or produced greater innovation. In 2014-15, HMI Probation continued to make good progress on the longer-term regular inspections of youth and adult offending work, including publishing five thematic reports on girls in the criminal justice system, child protection arrangements in probation trusts and Youth Offending Teams, the contribution of Youth Offending Teams to the Troubled Families initiative, the effectiveness of resettlement arrangements for children released from custody, and the second part of an inspection on people with learning difficulties in the criminal justice system.

Published 11 August 2015

[Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre](#)

HM Inspectorate of Prisons

This report of an unannounced inspection of the Bedfordshire immigration detention centre says that Yarl's Wood has deteriorated since its last inspection and the needs of the women held have grown. Inspectors were concerned to find that 99 pregnant women were detained in 2014, despite the Home Office's policy stating pregnant women should not normally be detained. Overall, the inspection found that conditions at the centre, which was holding 354 people, mostly women, at the time of the visit, had deteriorated since the last inspection in June 2013. However, the report says that while Yarl's Wood is rightly a place of national concern, staff on the ground should not be blamed for this as most of them worked hard to mitigate the worst effects of detention.

Published 12 August 2015

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Assessing the risk, protecting the child: evaluation reports

NSPCC

The majority of adults who pose a risk to children are not in the criminal justice system. They are frequently not assessed or subject to any treatment and are often living with or having contact with children. The Assessing the Risk, Protecting the Child service assesses the risk such men pose to children in their own family, or their partner's family. Three evaluation reports summarise findings from interviews with service users, the professionals making the referrals, and the NSPCC practitioners delivering the service.

Published 13 August 2015

5. Statistics**Health and Wellbeing of 15 year olds in England: smoking prevalence - findings from the What About YOUTH? Survey 2014**

Health and Social Care Information Centre

What About YOUTH? 2014 (WAY 2014) is a newly-established survey designed to collect local authority level data on a range of health behaviours amongst 15 year-olds. A main report covering all the key findings from the survey will be published in December 2015. This is the first report to be published from the survey, covering the smoking findings. Key highlights include: 24 per cent of young people had ever smoked; 8 per cent of young people were current smokers; Girls were more likely than boys to have ever smoked (28 per cent and 21 per cent respectively); Over a quarter of young people in the most deprived areas had ever smoked (27 per cent), compared to just over a fifth of young people in the least deprived areas (21 per cent); Young people from a BME background were less likely to say they had ever smoked than young people from a white background (17 per cent and 26 per cent respectively).

Published 4 August 2015

Reported road casualties in Britain: quarterly provisional estimates Q1 2015

Department for Transport

Statistics on personal injury accident statistics in the year ending March 2015 on public roads in Great Britain. Child killed or seriously injured (KSI) casualties decreased by 6 per cent to 1,910 and child pedestrian KSI casualties decreased by 8 per cent. Child casualties of all severities decreased by 3 per cent to 15,860 compared with the previous year.

Published 6 August 2015

National Citizen Service participation data

Cabinet Office

This publication provides the numbers National Citizen Service (NCS) participants by local authority region from 2011 to spring 2015.

Published 7 August 2015

Care applications in July 2015

Cafcass

In July 2015, Cafcass received a total of 1,111 care applications - a 9% increase compared to those received in July 2014. This brings the total number of care applications for the current financial year (April to July) to 4,092, a 14 per cent increase on the 3,580 recorded in the same period last year.

Published 12 August 2015

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Cafcass private law demand – July 2015

Cafcass

In July 2015, Cafcass received a total of 3,554 new private law cases - a 23% increase on July 2014 levels.

Published 12 August 2015

Children's social care data in England 2015

Ofsted

This is the first time all Ofsted's social care inspection statistics have been published together in one bulletin. The data incorporates the latest inspection grade for 2,787 active children's social care providers and 59 local authority children's services departments. It reveals that three-quarters of the children's services departments assessed under the single inspection framework (SIF) have been given the two lowest ratings. Of the 59 local authority children's social care services inspected between November 2013, when the SIF was introduced, and 30 June 2015, 23.7 per cent (14) were graded "inadequate" and 52.5 per cent (31) were graded "requires improvement". A further 14 children's services departments were rated "good" under Ofsted's four-level grading framework. No authority's services were deemed "outstanding", the highest rating. The data shows the area of weakest performance among local authorities is child protection services, with one in five departments being judged inadequate and 34 requiring improvement. Services for looked-after children were deemed to be the strongest area of performance, with a third of local authorities (20) judged good.

Published 13 August 2015

Youth custody data

Ministry of Justice

This statistical release gives figures for June 2015 on the population of children and young people in custody in secure children's homes (SCHs), secure training centres (STCs) and young offender institutions (YOIs). It also contains more detailed information on the make-up of the custody population by legal basis for detention, accommodation type, age group, gender, ethnicity and region of origin.

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The National Children's Bureau is a leading charity that for 50 years has been improving the lives of children and young people, especially the most vulnerable. We work with children and for children, to influence government policy, be a strong voice for young people and practitioners, and provide creative solutions on a range of social issues. For more information visit www.ncb.org.uk

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