

## News links from August 2021

### Obesity, Food and Nutrition

Type 2 diabetes, the main cause of which is thought to be obesity, is on the increase in children and young people and 1,560 English children now have the condition. Unfortunately, only 30% of these children currently receive the right support, according to [Diabetes UK](#), who are calling for a uniform level of support as well as “innovative ways” of reducing overweight and obesity in children.

[Read More](#)

[Public Health England](#)'s latest statistics revealed the extent of the north-south divide when it comes to overweight children. Currently almost 40,000 children are already overweight or obese when they start primary school. Only one area (Greenwich, London) appears in the top 20. [Read More](#)

On the other side of the coin, we have an eating disorders crisis in young people, with waiting lists at record levels and more children and young people receiving treatment for eating disorders than ever before, according to the Royal College of Psychiatrists. [Read More](#)

The NSPCC has released figures on Childline counselling sessions to children about eating and body image disorders. Figures for 2020/21 show that there were 4,986 counselling sessions on body image and eating disorder issues. This included a 13% increase in counselling sessions to 12- to 15-year-olds compared with 2019/20, and a 7% increase in counselling sessions to 16- to 18-year-olds. [Read More](#)

### The Good Childhood Report

The [Children's Society](#) published its 2021 Good Childhood report in August and found that children's happiness is in an alarming state of decline. An estimated 7% of 10-15 year olds (306,000 children) are not happy with their lives. This is in contrast to 173,000 children a decade ago. School, friendships and how they feel about the way they look are causing the greatest dissatisfaction in adolescence.

[Read the Summary Report](#) or [Read the Full Report](#)

### Mental Health

[Young Minds](#), the mental health charity, called for help to be available to every young person who reaches out. Their report shows how an already overstretched system is a long way from meeting demand.

[Read More](#). Accounts of mothers forced to give up their lives and careers to get help for their severely ill children were published in the Guardian ([Read More](#)) and the [NHS Confederation](#) considered the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health and the services that support them, describing the “tipping point” that is being reached by mental health services. [Read More](#)

### Children's Services in crisis

*“A sharp rise in social services referrals during lockdown, plus spiralling costs for mental health support and a bulging backlog in the family courts, with some councils buckling under the weight of the extra work brought by coronavirus”* is the stark verdict of The Guardian following its investigation into the state of children's services in England. The [Association of Directors of Children's Services](#) is calling for a cap on the fees that private providers can charge to local authorities, with placements for some children costing almost £10,000 a week. Some local authorities are expected to overspend by up to £12m on children's services this year, and leaders say they are struggling to deal with the increase in demand.

[Read the full article here.](#)

## Children's Social Care

“[The Case for Change](#)” - the independent review of children's social care - described the care system in England as a “30-year-old tower of Jenga held together with Sellotape: simultaneously rigid and yet shaky”, and aimed to start a debate in order to find positive, speedy and lasting solutions. Feedback was open until mid August to help the review continue to its next phase and final recommendations.

John MacAllister, the Chair of Review, wrote to the government setting out three areas identified as needing urgent investment that should be prioritised in the spending review. The areas include: family help to support families who are struggling to parent their children in conditions of adversity; homes for children in care; and the mental health of children in care. [Read the letter](#)

Read a selection of feedback to the review: [From Ofsted](#) [From Become](#) (charity for children and young people in care) [From BASW](#) (professional association for social work).

The Local Government Ombudsman annual report revealed that the highest number of complaints received in the last year were about education and children's services. Furthermore, 77% of them were upheld. [Read More](#)

## Poverty and Inequality

The proposed cut to the Universal Credit uplift introduced at the start of the pandemic continued to attract comment and pleas to the Government to reconsider. Baroness Lister ([see here](#)) described the original decision to increase UC as “*tacit acknowledgement that its level is simply too low for a decent life*”. The [Child Poverty Action Group](#) continues to analyse and quantify the impact of scrapping the uplift ([see here](#)). Last April the uplift was extended, but only for six months, and it will be removed at the end of September.

The Metro Mayor of Liverpool, Steve Rotheram, wrote about a two-tier system “*with many children's fates decided before they ever set foot in a classroom; their futures decided by the wealth of their parents and their postcode*”. [Read More](#)

## Pre-school Childcare

30 hours per week free childcare is available to working parents in England and Wales for children aged 3-4, but only if they earn at least the National Minimum Wage or Living Wage for an average 16 hours a week. [The Sutton Trust](#) examined this policy in their “[A Fair Start? Equalising Access to Early Education](#)” report. They conclude that the poorest children are nearly a year behind their peers when they start school. Quality early years provision has the potential to reverse this but, unfortunately, is underfunded, underappreciated and unequal, with most of the country's poorest families locked out of the scheme. [Read the Report](#)

In contrast, the Scottish Parliament, whose doubling of free childcare hours had stalled during the pandemic, announced that from the start of the new term all 3-4 year olds across Scotland would be eligible for 1140 (30 hrs pw in term time) free childcare. Unlike England, this is regardless of parental status. [Read More](#)

How did [Sure Start](#) impact on children's health? This was the question asked by the [Institute of Fiscal Studies](#) in their investigation published in August. [Read More](#)

## Behaviour Management

The Dept for Education will review the behaviour and discipline, and suspensions and permanent exclusions guidance later this year, and launched [a call for evidence](#) to help inform its work. Read the responses from the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition [here](#), from the ADCS (Assc. of Directors of Children's Services) [here](#) and the Centre for Mental Health [here](#).

## Free Bikes in Scotland

3,000 bicycles, at a cost of £2.5m, will be distributed in six pilot schemes across Scotland as part of the Government's plan to provide access to a bike to all youngsters. The 12-month pilot schemes will trial a range of different approaches to find out what works best. [Read More](#).