

## A Vicious Circle

News Links from January 2020

Childhood in the UK is in crisis. A vicious circle of inactivity, mental health problems and overweight feed off each other and are likely to result in the least healthy adult population in living memory.

We intend to supply you with links to recent, relevant evidence. [Please get in touch with us](#) if you would like support to raise these issues in Parliament. All references have appeared since the start of the New Year.

One in four children and young people referred to mental health services in England last year were not accepted for treatment, according to research by the **Education Policy Institute**, raising concerns that many are still failing to get vital support at an early stage. It was estimated that more than 130,000 of those referred to specialist services in 2018-19 were “rejected”, among them young people who have self-harmed, suffered eating disorders and experienced abuse.

[Read the news report](#)

## Outgoing Chief Medical Officer Dame Sally Davies calls time on childhood obesity

In her October 2019 special report on childhood obesity, the outgoing Chief Medical Officer for England Dame Sally Davies gives her final advice to government on health issues, doubting that the 2030 target (of halving childhood obesity) will

be reached without some really serious measures being introduced. [Read the full article](#) or [download Dame Sally’s report](#).

## Under 5s National Survey – Five Big Questions

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22/01/20 - The Duchess of Cambridge launched a UK-wide survey to help improve early childhood. The five-question online survey aims to “spark a national conversation” to help create “lasting change for generations to come”

[See the survey](#)

[Read the news report](#)

In other Early Years news, a study has found that an early life full of neglect, deprivation and adversity leads to people growing up with smaller brains.

[Read the news report](#)

## Is walking to school enough to combat obesity?

One of the UK government's goals in the **Childhood Obesity Plan** is to increase the number of children who walk to school. Walking is certainly healthy, but is it enough to combat childhood obesity? **Rob Noonan, Lecturer, Appetite and Obesity, University of Liverpool** says Combating childhood obesity needs more than simply getting children to walk to school more often. That's because many factors influence a child's weight, including economic and environmental ones that affect physical activity and diet.

[Read the article](#) or [Read the research](#)

## Online Protection

Internet safety has again been in the news this month, with **Baroness Benjamin** pleading in the Lords for action to protect children from online pornography. She also called for a Cabinet Minister for Children's Health and Wellbeing. [See more.](#)

Meanwhile, **The UK Information Commissioner's Office**, tasked with creating regulations to protect children online, will enforce the new rules from autumn 2021. Sites must assess content for sexual abuse and suicide risk or face fines of up to £17m. [Read the full article.](#)

A report from the **Royal College of Psychiatrists** says that the risks and benefits of social media use on children's mental health cannot be understood unless companies hand over their data to researchers. [Read the article](#) or [Read the report.](#)

## Free breakfast pilot for secondary pupils in Wales

The Welsh Government said a £450,000 pilot scheme starting in September would provide an extra allowance for Year 7 children receiving free school meals. The idea is to help them pay for breakfast as well as lunch and follows concerns about secondary school pupils going hungry.

[Read more here.](#)

## Isolation Booths

More reports about the use of isolation booths for disruptive pupils tell us that some schools are converting toilet blocks for use as isolation booths ([read more](#)) and the Centre for Mental Health (CMH) warns that putting challenging pupils in isolation for extended periods at school can harm their mental health ([read more](#)).

## Wellbeing of Future Generations – new bill in the Lords

Lord Bird introduced the Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill as a Private Members Bill in the House of Lords. [Read more about this.](#)

## Children in Care

About 30,000 children in care live outside their local area, with nearly 12,000 placed 20 miles or more from friends and family, a [report from the Children's Commissioner](#) suggests, while a Guardian investigation revealed that a lack of facilities to house vulnerable children in UK has led to rise in unsafe placements: [read more here.](#)

## Abuse

Police and social workers investigating child sex exploitation in Manchester knew children were suffering “the most profound abuse... but did not protect them”, a report has found: [read more.](#) Meanwhile, Police Chief Shaun Sawyer said that levels of child criminal exploitation were “almost back to Victorian times” as gangs capitalise on a lack of youth facilities and school exclusions. [Read more.](#)