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News links from September

A Cabinet Minister for Children and Young People

In early September members of the Children's Alliance gathered at a Westminster Reception, hosted by Southend MP Anna Firth, to announce the publication of the fourth in a series of reports (see right) and to renew their calls for a Cabinet Minister for Children and Young People.

Speaking at the Reception, Hon. President [Baroness Frances D'Souza](#) said:

"Sky high energy bills and a catastrophic cost of living crisis hot on the heels of a once-in-a-century pandemic mean that we cannot go on as before. Children and young people are consigned to the margins of a country they will one day lead and there has been no legislation about their health and wellbeing since 2010. The new Prime Minister must stop the rot and appoint a Cabinet Minister for children and young people who will ensure that their needs are at the heart of policy in all Government Departments. Pilot schemes and locally commissioned projects are poor excuses for decisive national leadership at a time of national emergency."

[Read the news report](#)

Early Years

With the [announcement](#) of Kit Malthouse as the new education secretary, early years providers and schools have raised the alarm for urgent help as the sector is 'on its knees'. Sector leaders have [called for urgent financial support](#) with the [National Day Nurseries Association](#) (NDNA) echoing this plea. The NDNA Chief Executive, Purnima Tanuku, hopes for some continuity and stability, saying that Mr Malthouse's priority must be to invest sufficiently in the early years sector and its workforce, because they make all the difference to children's education and ultimately, life chances. Ms Tanuku outlines what that package of support could look like [here](#) in her call for greater assistance to the industry.

The Four Children's Alliance Reports

"Family and Community", the final report in a series of four by Children's Alliance, discusses the changing nature of the UK's communities and the likely outcomes for future society.

Earlier reports in the series were:

- Early Years
- Physical Health
- Mental Health

All four reports can be downloaded [here](#).

National Child Measurement Programme Analysis

A new report, [Changes in the weight status of children between the first and final years of primary school](#) is now available from the Office for Health Improvement & Disparities. It is the first national analysis of the [National Child Measurement Programme](#) (NCMP) data and it assesses how weight status changed in children in between their reception year (aged 4 to 5) in 2013/14 to year 6 (aged 10 to 11) in 2019/20.

The end of the Obesity Strategy?

It was widely reported that officials at the [Office for Health Improvement and Disparities](#) were 'aghast' at the news that the review of measures to deter people from eating junk food as part of an anti-obesity strategy could be scrapped. The [Obesity Health Alliance](#) called it a 'kick in the teeth'.

[Read the Guardian report](#)

The Good Childhood Report

The [Children's Society](#) has released its annual [Good Childhood Report](#) which has revealed an overall decline in children's wellbeing.

- Around 1 in 16 children (6%) aged 10 to 15 in the UK are unhappy with their lives
- Almost 1 in 8 (12%), an estimated 562,000 of 10-15 year olds, are unhappy with school.

[Download the report](#)

Teenage Suicide

Data from the [Office for National Statistics](#) (ONS) showed that suicide rates amongst 15-19 year olds in England rose by 35% from 2020 to 2021, with 147 teenagers taking their own lives in 2020 and 198 doing so in 2021, the highest number for over 30 years.

In response to this huge jump of over a third, [YoungMinds](#) has urged the government for greater support.

[Read more.](#)

[See the ONS data](#)

Barnardo's Campaign

[Barnardo's](#) have been working hard to highlight the mental health crisis amongst children in England. Their Briefing Paper: [The case for a Mental Health Support Team in every school](#) describes how poor mental health can be a leading cause of illness, resulting in long term health, social and economic impacts. They are also calling on others to support them in their [Petition: Ask the government to provide mental health support in all schools](#). As Barnardo's emphasises, the Government has funded support for up to one in three (36%) schools but under current plans, by 2023, 6.5 million children experiencing poor mental health will still have no access to help at school. They have made these points in a [Letter to Health Secretary Therese Coffey & Education Secretary Kit Malthouse](#),

School Food

Schools in England are warning of a 'heartbreaking' rise in hungry children with headteachers and food aid charities saying that they are struggling to cope with growing demand from families unable to afford food. Research and forthcoming data announced by [Chefs in Schools](#) show that families are already struggling even prior to the start of the winter and its associated increased strain on households.

[Read the news report.](#)

Meanwhile, all 272,000 primary school pupils in Wales are set to get free lunches by 2024, with a further extension planned for around 6,000 nursery-age children.

[Read the news report.](#)

Childcare Costs

The cost of five-day after-school care now costs more than an average family weekly food shop - current provision is £800 more than in 2010. The Coram children's charity's [annual holiday childcare survey](#) has all the details.

School Finances

An article in the Independent highlighted the financial crisis in schools, with matters on such a knife edge that schools have to rely on charitable donations because they are so poorly funded. [Read the news report.](#)



Sign our petition and make a difference to our children.