

Health & Care Bill: Second Reading, House of Commons

Parliamentary Briefing - July 2021

Recommendations

Barnardo's is calling for the Health and Care Bill to:

1. Undergo a Child Impact Assessment

- We are concerned the Bill only addresses health and social care integration from the perspective of adult services. It remains unclear how the Bill will apply to children's services and how legislative duties under child specific legislation will align with the Bill. **We are calling for the Bill to undergo a Child Impact Assessment to ensure it is fit for purpose in delivering the joined up, holistic care and support services so many of our children desperately need.**

2. Ensure better representation of the Voluntary and Community Sector

- Charities play an important role in the delivery of integrated health and social care services for children and families, holding a wealth of local knowledge and expertise.
- As currently proposed, the Health and Care Partnership, which is set up by the local Integrated Care Board, will only include representatives from the NHS and relevant local authorities. We are concerned that this will exclude charities and risks losing the resource and expertise they hold that could inform the assessment and planning of services to meet the needs of children, young people and families in all areas of England.
- Primary legislation and guidance should establish a clear, inclusive, robust framework for localities to work with, that harnesses local expertise and maximises collaborative working amongst all agencies who deliver these services, including charities. **We are calling for the Bill to include a duty to guarantee representation of voluntary and community sector organisations on the Integrated Care System (ICS) Health and Care Partnerships.**

3. Establish a Better Care Fund for integrated health and child social care services.

- Include a **fund for health and child social care service integration**, similar to the Better Care Fund already included in the Bill for promoting integrated Health and Adult Social Care services.

Summary

- Children growing up in England today face some of the worst health outcomes in Europe¹ from poor levels of nutrition and high levels of childhood obesity² to increasingly poor mental health³ and infant mortality rates are higher than the European average.⁴ Additionally, children living in the most deprived communities face poorer health outcomes than their wealthier peers.⁵
- We know from our frontline experience of delivering services to children and their families that they require support that is holistic and integrated – not broken into silos labelled 'health' or 'social care'.
- The Health and Care Bill is a unique and timely opportunity to tackle health inequalities for children and young people and improve integration of health and social care services for all.
- However, as drafted, the Bill does not specifically address the needs of children and risks overlooking the expertise of the voluntary and community sector, which often provides trusted, high quality integrated services for children and their families. The changes we are proposing to the Bill would help improve joint working between health and

¹ Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2018) *Child health in 2030 in England*

https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/child_health_in_2030_in_england_-report_2018-10.pdf

² *Obesity Statistics - House of Commons Library* (parliament.uk)

³ *Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2020: Wave 1 follow up to the 2017 survey - NHS Digital*

⁴ *Infant mortality halved between 1998 and 2018 - Products Eurostat News - Eurostat* (europa.eu)

⁵ Health Foundation, 2020. *Highlighting the health inequalities faced by young people in the UK*

social care bodies, including charities, incentivise innovation, and achieve earlier intervention – before children reach crisis point. **Ultimately, we believe they will deliver better outcomes for children.**

- **If the Government is serious about tackling health inequalities and ‘levelling up’ health outcomes, then these changes are a crucial starting point.**

Impact of health inequalities on children and young people

- For children and young people, health – physical and mental - starts in their homes, schools, neighbourhoods, and communities. The social circumstances and physical environments in which children are born and raised has a significant impact.
- Evidence shows that **children’s physical and psychological health is getting worse.** However, children born into poor quality housing, unsafe neighbourhoods, and living in poverty are more likely to experience challenges affecting their health outcomes.⁶
 - **Growing numbers of children are not getting the nutrition and exercise they need.** At age 4, almost one in 10 children was obese in 2019/20. At the age of 11 more than one in five children is obese.⁷ Children living in deprived areas are more likely to be obese compared to their wealthier peers.⁸
 - There is evidence that high levels of psychological stress, such as living in cramped, overcrowded housing or being at risk of neglect or abuse, affect a child’s hormone levels, placing them at **greater risk of common childhood illnesses** such as ear infections, viral infections, asthma, and intestinal infections.⁹
 - **Poor mental health.** 1 in 6 children aged 5-16 in England have a mental health disorder.¹⁰
 - **Infant mortality** rates in England have remained stable over the last five years at 3.9 deaths per 1000 live births, whilst rates have fallen in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.¹¹

The role of charities

- Charities play an important role in the delivery of health and social care services and often have specialist knowledge and experience, not held in the public sector.
- In 2019/2020, Barnardo’s supported 358,800 children, young people, parents and carers, through more than 800 services and partnerships. We provide a range of health and social care services, from universal and targeted preventative and early intervention support to mental health and wellbeing services, including Mental Health Support Teams in schools and targeted therapeutic and support.

An innovative example of integrated children’s mental health services in Solihull - SOLAR is a partnership between Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, Barnardo’s and Autism West Midlands and provides access to a range of integrated emotional wellbeing and mental health services to children and families (0-19).

Questions to ask during the debate:

1. How will the Government ensure that the new integrated care systems prioritise infants, children and young people’s health?
2. Will the Government commit to improving integrated support for families, with a Family Hub in every community, so parents and children can access the integrated health and social care support when they need it?
3. Will the Minister consider conducting a ‘child impact assessment’ of the Bill?
4. Will the Minister respond to calls for a Better Care Fund to facilitate the integration of Health and Child Social Services for children?

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⁶ <https://stateofchildhealth.rcpch.ac.uk/one-year-on/>

⁷ [National Child Measurement Programme, England 2019/20 School Year - NHS Digital](#)

⁸ [Obesity Statistics - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](#)

⁹ <https://www.bmj.com/content/371/bmj.m3048>

¹⁰ [Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2020: Wave 1 follow up to the 2017 survey - NHS Digital](#)

¹¹ [Infant mortality – RCPCH – State of Child Health](#)