

Briefing: Queen's Speech

May 2021

Summary

Children and young's health outcomes in the UK are amongst the **worst in Europe**. Inequalities are widening, exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic. This briefing considers the opportunities for child health set out in the Queen's Speech, and assesses what is needed from the legislation and beyond to reverse this trajectory

Health and Care Bill

RCPCH broadly welcomes the Health and Care Bill and we recognise that it formalises principles that have been the direction of travel for NHS England for some years.

We noted in our flagship project, **State of Child Health**, in 2020, that greater integration and working in partnership to deliver shared priorities is **essential** to reduce inequalities, to prioritise public health and prevention, and to improve health services for children and young people.

We want to see the Bill and the accompanying statutory guidance reflect the importance of clinical leadership and ensuring children and young people are involved in service planning and delivery.

#We are pleased to see the commitments to ban on junk food marketing on television pre 9pm and a total ban online listed as important elements of the Bill. These are critical measures to reducing rising levels of childhood obesity and the **increasing inequalities** in these rates.

However, there are a number of other important points RCPCH would have liked to see in the **White Paper** and we hope that due consideration is given as part of the Government's proposals:

- A mandated role for a strategic lead of children's health services within each ICS.
- Consideration of whether there is a role for an independent body to undertake workforce projections that reflect population health needs to deliver a workforce that is diverse and inclusive to deliver culturally competent and effective care, and an associated statutory duty on the Secretary of State to ensure NHSEI, HEE and others have what they need to ensure those projections are met.
- The focus on reducing health inequalities better reflected in law both at the local and national level beyond the specific issues of obesity and fluoridation as set out in the White Paper.

Mental Health Act

RCPCH welcomes the new Mental Health Act and understands that the [White Paper](#) published in January 2021 and subsequent consultation is part of a wider engagement process with all those who may be impacted by these reforms. Before the Bill is published, RCPCH wants to see consultation with children, young people and their families. Extensive consultation and impact assessment is the only way the full consequences of reform will become evident.

Many of the proposals outlined for reform depend on planned complementary changes in the delivery of community mental health services, and other health care provision. The demand for child and adolescent mental health services means this forthcoming legislation must be accompanied by the provision of renewed investment, resourcing and ring-fenced funding of CAMHS services – funding provided should reflect local service demand, facilitate cross-agency working and be regularly reviewed. Funding for children and young people's mental health services should grow faster than both overall NHS funding and total mental health spending.

New Plan for Immigration Legislation

RCPCH awaits the publication of the Immigration Bill to consider the detail. There is [evidence](#) that the current health-charging regime for migrants is leading to direct and indirect negative impacts on children and pregnant women. Because of fears about charging, families may delay seeking medical attention when they need it, leading to exacerbation of health problems and a longer-term impact. One example of this is [lower immunisation uptake](#) amongst migrant children compared to their non-migrant peers.

RCPCH's priority for any forthcoming legislation will be ensuring that children and families seeking asylum have equitable access to local services. It is concerning that this is not reflected in the policy paper '[New Plan for Immigration.](#)' This Bill provides the opportunity for the migrant health surcharge to be scrapped, and for the Government to conduct an impact assessment of the policy for the years it's been in place.

Draft Online Safety Bill

We are pleased that the Online Harms Bill has been brought forward to the new parliamentary session. Our priority for the legislation is for children and young people to be fully involved in any consultation. We also want to see it reflect the commentary produced by the [Chief Medical Officer's review](#) published in February 2019.

Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill

We are keen to see that paediatric research is given proportional priority and funding as part of plans for increased investment in the Life Sciences sector.

Environment Bill

We welcome the Government's commitment to binding targets on reducing greenhouse gas emissions but we want to see them [go further](#) and bring the 2050 target forwards. We welcome the focus on the public health impacts of air pollution.

Calls to Government

Both within the context of the legislation announced in the Queen's Speech and outside of it, there are a number of things RCPCH wants to see from the Government.

In order to ensure all children get the best start in life, enjoy the best possible health, and child health outcomes are levelled up across the country, we are calling on Government to undertake the following actions over the course of the next parliament:

- **Implement an overarching child health strategy**, multi-departmental in approach; to help ensure existing health inequalities are not entrenched by COVID-19. This will also help to embed a child health in all policies approach to policy making.
- Develop and introduce a cross-government **strategy to reduce health inequalities**.
- Ensure the statutory guidance accompanying the Health and Care Bill **mandates and strategic children and young people's lead in every ICS**.
- Ensure the Health and Care Bill includes a **duty on the Secretary of State to ensure NHS England, Health Education England and others**

have what they need to ensure population-based projections for NHS workforce needs are met.

- **Provide ring-fenced funding of CAMHS services** that reflects local service demand.
- **Scrap the migrant health surcharge.** Government should conduct an impact assessment of the policy for the years it's been in place.
- Introduce legislation to bring in the ban junk food advertising on pre-watershed broadcast and online.
- **Ensure children and young people are involved in consultation exercises** in relation to the Online Harms Bill and Mental Health Act.
- **Urgently increase funding to Local Authorities Provide sufficient funding for Local Authorities** commensurate to local population need. This must include restoring the **£1 billion of real-terms cuts** to the public health grant since 2015. Future investment in public health provision should increase at the same rate as NHS funding and be allocated based on population health needs.

About RCPCH

The [Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health \(RCPCH\)](#) is the membership body for paediatricians, representing more than 19,500 child health professionals in the UK and abroad. We are responsible for the training, examinations and professional standards of paediatricians across the country, and we use our research and experience to develop recommendations to promote better child health outcomes.

Our mission is to transform child health through knowledge, innovation and expertise and to ensure that children are at the heart of the health service.

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