



CHILDREN DESERVE *BETTER* THAN THIS!!!

News Release from The Children's Alliance

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Immediate use

Baroness Frances D'Souza has called for the appointment of a Cabinet Minister for Children as a new report criticises the Government's strategy for children's physical health as a '*crude fixation*' on '*weight management*'.

The Honorary President of The Children's Alliance said:

'Physical Health' is a comprehensive study of children's physical health during the time of Covid-19. It features the work of 37 nationally-renowned specialists in children's health, and it is published during the 'festive season' when children are traditionally bombarded by advertised food and drink 'treats' – to be succeeded by yet more ineffective measures narrowly focussed on 'fighting the flab' by calorie counting and step counting.

'Without effective co-ordinated measures led by Government, we run the risk that the next generation of UK adults will be the least healthy in living memory.'

*The authors maintain that good physical health is an entitlement for all children and young people. **A new Cabinet Minister for Children would make that a focus in ALL Government Departments.'***

'Physical Health' shows that some groups of children and young people begin life hampered by disadvantage due to their family grouping, geographical, cultural or socioeconomic circumstances. Proposals include:

- Preconception health strategy to be fully integrated into primary healthcare (including practitioner initial and ongoing training) and raised in routine discussion during visits to a range of clinicians such as GPs, pharmacists, nurses, dietitians and sexual health services; preconception health to be a statutory national school curriculum requirement
- A 'family first' as opposed to 'children's diet' approach to be advocated by health and childcare professionals

- Re-positioning strategy to promote and encourage lifelong physical activity so that it is not presented solely/predominantly through a medical or 'deficit' lens
- A 'gendered all policy areas' approach to physical activity; gender analysis and public reporting required of how budgetary allocations of public money and national lottery funding affect physical activity opportunities for girls, boys, women and men; all media to proactively increase coverage of women's sport; providing girls with role models and the incorporation of equitable learning experiences accommodating the values, motivation and aspirations of all girls into programmes designed to develop physical literacy and fundamental movement skills of young people
- Regular measurement of food insecurity; research and funding into good models of holiday provision. More data to be provided on the dietary health challenges that have manifested recently for British families experiencing food insecurity
- Review and re-set the benefits system, enabling swift and appropriate responses to food insecurity
- Place race alongside poverty in discussions about inequality and disparity
- Equip Local Government agencies to identify and intervene where necessary in settings where children have suffered Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) of any sort; involving the voluntary and community sector in provision of safe, supportive environments for children and young people
- A National Play Strategy for England with play included in Ofsted Inspection
- National and Local Government cross-departmental policy to address children's health: a 'Health in All Policies approach.

Dr Vicky Randall, Senior Fellow at the University of Winchester, said:

"For far too long now the area of children's physical health has been preoccupied, almost exclusively, on weight management and addressing rising levels of obesity. The reality: not only have we failed to make any headway in these areas we have done so at the expense of other equally pressing health agendas.

This much needed report calls for action and stresses that now, more than ever, significant changes are needed to ensure that a healthy life, from the earliest stage of life, is not just for the lucky few."

Lead Author Helen Clark added:

'It is the season of goodwill, but as this report demonstrates, in some parts of England, a BAME girl born into a poor family is facing a future with the health odds stacked against her.

We know that a healthy physical environment coupled with positive healthy behaviours that are established from birth can mean a blueprint for lifelong good health.

*The Government now has a unique opportunity to build a healthier course for our future adult generation who will inherit the post-pandemic world – and that's the best present for every child this Christmas – and **every Christmas to come.***

Note: The Children's Alliance is a Water Babies outreach not-for-profit Community Interest Company: <https://childrensalliance.org.uk/>

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