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News links from March 2023

350,000 more Children Pulled into Poverty

An estimated 350,000 more children were pulled into poverty last year, largely because the Government cut the £20 universal credit uplift half-way through the year, reveals new analysis of official figures. Child Poverty Action Group's (CPAG) analysis of the Department for Work and Pensions' 'Households Below Average Income', covering April 2021 - April 2022 shows:

- * 2 million children were in poverty in the year April 2021-April 2022. This is up from 3.6 million in 2010-11.
- * 45 per cent of all children in poverty were in families with a youngest child aged under five.
- * 71 per cent of 'poor' children lived in working families - [read here](#).

Ofsted Inspections

Stress of Ofsted inspections cited as factor in deaths of 10 teachers over the past 25 years. Research by charity the Hazards Campaign and the University of Leeds, intensified what Ofsted called the "outpouring of anger" in the sector over the death of Berkshire headteacher Ruth Perry, who killed herself in January. Her family have attributed her death to the inspectorate having downgraded her school. Education unions called for all inspections to be halted - [read here](#).

Utah to limit teen social media

Utah has become the first US state to require social media firms to get parental consent for children to use their apps and verify users are at least 18. The governor said he signed the two sweeping measures to protect young people in the state. The bills will give parents full access to their children's online accounts, including posts and private messages. The move comes amidst heightened concern over the impact of social media on children's mental health - [read here](#).

Self Harm in Children

Self-harm hospital admissions for children aged eight to 17 in the UK jumped 22% in one year. The age group is now the largest for self-harm admissions, with all others seeing a drop, according to NHS data. Charities say early access to support is vital, but high thresholds and long waiting lists mean more young people are ending up in hospital - [read here](#).

Oral Health

Oral health survey of 5 year old children from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities released - [read here](#). An eight-year-old girl waiting three years to have three teeth removed has been left in "agony". The Department of Health and Social Care said it was investing more than £3bn a year into dentistry and would be announcing further measures to improve access to dentists - [read here](#).

Ghost Children - Little Evidence to Support Health Claims

More than 140,000 school children in England were officially “severely absent” in the summer term of 2022, according to official Department of Education figures - and the number of these pupils, missing at least 50% of classes, is growing. They are away from school for a variety of reasons - including anxiety and mental health, special educational needs and disabilities - [read here](#).

Why Kids Need Play for Mental Health

A recent research review finds strong evidence of the need for unstructured play. Unstructured play is critical for children’s mental health, in addition to boosting confidence. When children don’t play, they are more vulnerable to stress, depression, and anxiety. The ongoing decline in children’s mental health—and the current mental health emergency for children appears at least in part to be driven by a lack of opportunities to roam, play, and act independently. When children have little time and encouragement to play, they lose their sense of autonomy. They are not encouraged to think independently, to imagine or dream, or even to navigate the complexities of the world around them - [read here](#).

Princess of Wales Launches Taskforce for Early Childhood

Her Royal Highness The Princess of Wales has launched her new Business Taskforce for Early Childhood. The creation of the Business Taskforce for Early Childhood follows the launch of Shaping Us, a long-term campaign spearheaded by The Princess of Wales. The aims of the campaign are to transform the issue of early childhood and highlight the role society plays in building a ‘supportive and nurturing world’ around children and those who care for them - [read here](#).

Government Food Tsar Quits

Henry Dimbleby has resigned his position as ‘food tsar’, citing the Government’s “insane” inaction against obesity. In an interview with the Times, he said: “Winston Churchill talked about the greatest asset a nation can have is the health of its people”. Henry Dimbleby, who has been lead non-executive board member of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for the last five years, said a lack of central coordination meant the government is failing to come up with a solution to the systemic issue - [read here](#).

The Chancellor’s ‘Landmark’ Childcare Reform Pledge

Big funding questions hang over Chancellor’s ‘landmark’ childcare reform pledge. Sector leaders and experts have welcomed the Chancellor’s focus on childcare reform in the Budget, but warn the funding promised will not solve the current crisis, and there is no detail as yet on funding rates for providers of the expanded 30-hour offer - [read here](#).

Free Childcare: ‘Why do we have to wait?’

Research from charity Coram shows only half of local authorities currently have sufficient places for working families, with growing evidence the situation is worse in lower income areas. Neil Leitch of the Early Years Alliance, a group representing childcare providers, says the new money offered by the government is “unlikely to match what’s needed to put providers on a steady footing” - [read here](#).



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children.**