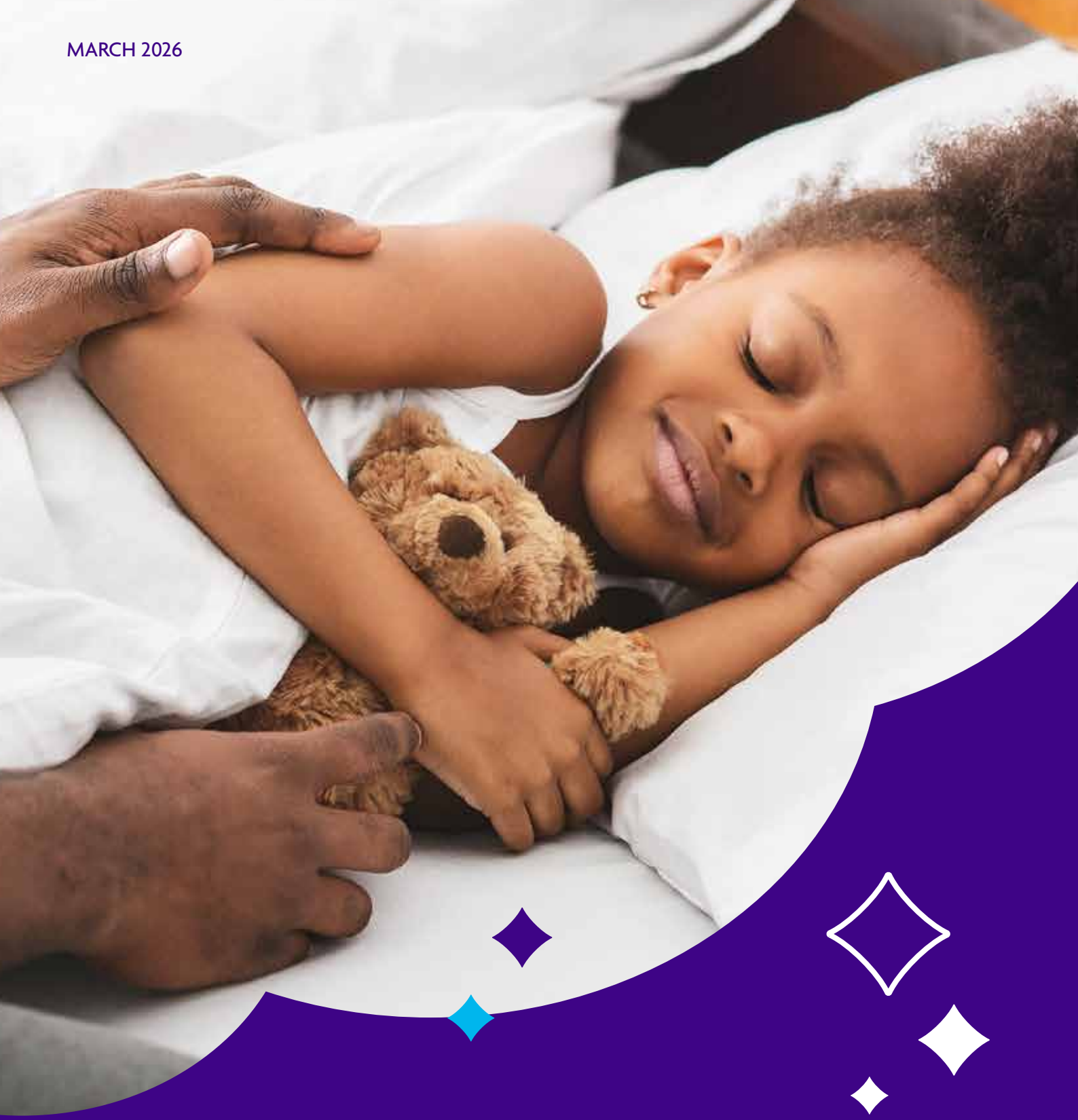
MARCH 2026

Making Sleep a Core Part of Scotland's Curriculum

#WakeUpToSleep



Sleep Action

Sleep Action (formerly Sleep Scotland) is the UK's oldest sleep charity, committed to transforming lives through compassionate sleep support and specialist training.

Our work is grounded in the latest sleep science and informed by over 28 years of frontline experience. We deliver evidence-based, accessible guidance that empowers families, educators, and health professionals to improve sleep.

sleepaction.org

Making Sleep a Core Part of Scotland's Curriculum

Sleep is not a luxury; it is a necessity as fundamental to health and wellbeing as a healthy diet and getting enough exercise.

We believe it is time for Scotland to wake up to the importance of sleep and embed it meaningfully within the education system.

#WakeUpToSleep

In partnership with University of St Andrews Sleep Well Scotland project

University of St Andrews

Our vision

A Scotland where every child and young person has the knowledge, tools and support to establish healthy sleep routines, empowering them to thrive in school, at home, and in their communities.

Why Sleep Must Be Part of the Curriculum

1. Sleep Underpins Learning and Wellbeing
2. The Evidence of the Benefits of Sleep is Clear
3. Teaching Sleep to Reduce Health Inequalities

Sleep Underpins Learning and Wellbeing

Children and young people who sleep well learn more effectively, show increased emotional regulation, and experience improved physical and mental health.

Sleep is central to cognitive development, memory consolidation and emotional resilience. Without it, we undermine the potential of Curriculum for Excellence to achieve its four capacities: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors.

The Evidence of the Benefits of Sleep is Clear

Research shows a direct link between poor sleep and lower academic performance, as well as an increased risk of anxiety and depression.

We know there are higher rates of behavioural challenges and greater socio-emotional difficulties for young people with poor sleep. This impacts the whole family. Despite this evidence, sleep remains absent from the national curriculum. This is a missed opportunity for prevention and early intervention.

Health Inequalities and Sleep

Sleep deprivation disproportionately affects children living in poverty or experiencing adversity.

By embedding sleep education in the curriculum, we can help reduce health inequalities and support the Scottish Government's vision for a fairer, healthier nation under the Public Health Scotland Strategic Plan and The Promise.

Our Call to Action

We are calling on the Scottish Government, Education Scotland and local authorities to:

1. Include Sleep in Health and Wellbeing Curricula

Ensure sleep is taught explicitly and appropriately at each level of the Curriculum for Excellence, with tailored content for early years, primary, and secondary pupils.

2. Provide Resources and Training for Educators

Equip teachers with high-quality, evidence-based tools and CPD to confidently deliver sleep education and recognise when a child may need more support.

3. Support Whole-School Approaches to Sleep

Incorporate sleep awareness into whole-school policies, including pastoral care, behaviour, and mental health strategies.

> **Scotland is a nation that values education, equity and wellbeing. By including sleep in the curriculum, we take a powerful step towards ensuring every child and young person can reach their full potential.**
>
> **We urge decision-makers to act now. It's time to bring sleep into the classroom, because there is no health and wellbeing without sleep.**
>
> **Alyson O'Brien,** Head of Service, Sleep Action

Legislative and Policy Context

This proposal supports Scotland's commitment to:

- **Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)** – Sleep supports all SHANARRI indicators, particularly Healthy, Achieving and Nurtured.
- **The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014** – Recognising the wellbeing of children and young people as a legal priority.
- **The Scottish Government's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2023)** – Promoting early intervention, prevention, and whole-system approaches.
- **UNCRC Incorporation** – Ensuring children's rights to health, education and development are upheld.

Our Values in Action

This campaign is shaped by our organisational values, which reflect what matters most to the people we work with so that everyone can thrive through healthy sleep:

T — Tailored

We put pupils at the heart of this change. Sleep education must reflect the realities of modern childhood and adolescence in Scotland.

H — Humour

Learning about sleep shouldn't put you to sleep. We believe in making it engaging, memorable and fun.

R — Resilient

Change is challenging, but we are determined and creative in finding ways to improve outcomes for all children.

I — Integrity

Our work is grounded in research, compassion and professionalism.

V — Value

Sleep affects everyone, but not equally. We celebrate diversity and seek to address the inequalities in sleep health.

E — Empathy

At every stage, our work is driven by care, compassion and the voices of those with lived experience.

> **It's time for Scotland to wake up to the importance of sleep. Sleep education is a powerful tool that delivers a happier, healthier school experience today and unlocks the foundation of wellbeing that lasts a lifetime.**
>
> **Alyson O'Brien,** Head of Service, Sleep Action

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Manifesto Signatories

This manifesto is more than a statement; it's a shared commitment to a better future for Scotland's youth. These signatories represent a diverse coalition of voices united by purpose and a commitment to action.

Join the movement:

Are you a senior leader, policymaker, or expert in education, sleep, health, medicine, research, or wellbeing? Join us as a signatory to the Sleep Action Manifesto and help make sleep a core part of Scotland's curriculum.

Email: manifesto@sleepaction.org

Alyson O'Brien

Head of Service, Sleep Action

Alyson is responsible for our Sleep Support and Training teams to ensure a high-quality service to both families and professionals. She is passionate about spreading the good word of sleep, and finding the right solution to a sleep issue at any age through training, education, and advice.

Dr Lizzie Hill

Senior Lecturer Sleep Physiology

Dr Lizzie Hill PhD RPSGT EST FHEA is a Clinical Scientist at UWE Bristol with 20+ years' experience working with adults and children with sleep disorders in clinical and research settings. She leads the PGCert Sleep Medicine programme, commissioned and funded by NHS England to address the skills gaps in clinical sleep services.

Dr Maria Gardani

Senior Lecturer & Sleep Action Trustee

Dr Gardani is a Lecturer in Clinical Psychology at the University of Edinburgh. She has 20+ years' experience as a sleep scientist in clinical and research settings. The primary focus of her research aims to explore the onset and maintenance of sleep and circadian difficulties across the lifespan and their association with physiological and environmental factors.

Dr Emma Gale

Research Fellow in Child and Adolescent Health

Dr Gale is a Research Fellow at the University of St Andrews, specialising in sleep health, circadian disruption, and the broader psychosocial determinants of health in young people. Her research is driven by a deep commitment to reducing health inequalities, improving wellbeing through early interventions, and ensuring that the voices of children, families, and frontline professionals are central to the design and delivery of health research.

Dawn Haughton

SHINE Network Manager, University of Glasgow

Following a 25-year career in teaching, Dawn is the Manager of the Schools Health and Wellbeing Improvement Research Network (SHINE) at the University of Glasgow. The SHINE network supports schools in addressing their health and wellbeing needs using a data-driven, systems-level approach to health improvement.

Gail Burden

CEO, Capella Charity & Chair, Charity Leadership Scotland

Gail is responsible for all aspects of Capella, the charity that operates Sleep Actions and Teens+. Gail is passionate about helping children and young people achieve their potential and is active in advocating for the rights of the child, and has been a panel member for Children's Hearings Scotland for over 5 years.

Hannah Graham-Dalgarno

Sleep Action Trustee

Hannah is the Founding Director of Pragmatic People which helps businesses and their people thrive. She has an extensive background in operational HR and senior strategic roles across various sectors and industries. Hannah is an academic tutor, supervisor and assessor of undergraduate and postgraduate business students in the higher education sector.

Julia White

Sleep Action Trustee

Julia runs a research and development consultancy, working with third-sector organisations, health boards and local authorities across Scotland. Much of her work has been developing effective partnership environments improving health and care outcomes for individuals. She supported the national development of health and social care partnerships.

Lisa Otty

Head of Data-led Methods, University of Edinburgh

Lisa has worked at the intersections of humanities research and technology throughout her career, across both academic and professional contexts. She has led and contributed to a wide range of research and educational support projects, both national and international. Over the last ten years, Lisa's work has increasingly focused on adopting digital technologies in the educational context.

Marc Strathie

Senior Policy Advisor for Devolved Nations, Institute of Directors

Marc develops policy insights aimed at creating a positive environment for boards, directors, and the wider business community in the Devolved Nations across the UK. Marc's expertise is in Policy and Public Affairs across public and non-governmental sectors. He has delivered policy change ranging from aviation, clean growth, productivity challenges and digital.

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University of St Andrews

Sleep Well Scotland

St Andrews University

Sleep Well Scotland treats rest as a vital health pillar. Using data from the "Scotland Speaks" study, the project advocates for a National Sleep Strategy and school curriculum reforms to ensure every Scot can achieve a healthy night's sleep.

WINNING SCOTLAND

Winning Scotland

Winning Scotland builds confidence, resilience, and ambition in children and young people. By empowering the adults who influence them, the charity delivers research-led initiatives like Planet Youth and growth mindset training.

Sleep ACTION

Formerly Sleep Scotland

sleepaction.org

enquiries@sleepaction.org

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There is no health and wellbeing without sleep.

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Sleep Action is a division of Capella a registered charity (SC027560) and company limited by guarantee (SC182935).
Registered office in Scotland: 60 Ravenscroft Street, Gilmerton, Edinburgh EH17 8QW.