

POLICY UPDATE

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CANCER SUPPORT

June 2015

Welcome to 'Policy Update', a monthly bulletin on the latest policy developments of relevance to those with an interest in cancer.

If you are reading this document on screen, the web addresses are hyperlinks which will take you directly to the relevant web pages or documents. If you would like any further information or have any questions or comments about 'Policy Update', please contact Christopher Smith, Policy and Partnerships Officer, on 020 7091 2222 or email christophersmith@macmillan.org.uk.

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United Kingdom

Osborne announces £200m cut to public health budgets.

Responding to the Government's announcement on in-year reductions to Whitehall departmental spending, Cllr David Sparks, Chair of the Local Government Association, said:

"It is clear that there will be further public spending reductions from the Government and councils will continue to play their part as they have done over the last five years. However, councils already have to find savings of £2.5 billion before April after receiving 8.5 per cent less funding from government to run local services in 2015/16. These savings were already going to be the most difficult yet.

"Core local government funding has been protected in-year and the Local Government Settlement has not been re-opened which is good news. However, a £200 million reduction in public health funding will clearly have some impact on councils' ability to improve the public's health and wellbeing and reduce demand for hospital, health and social care services."

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England

PM on plans for a seven-day NHS.

The Prime Minister, David Cameron, has used his first major speech since the election to set out his vision for a modern NHS that will work for patients 7 days a week. The government intends to prioritise patient access to all services – from GP access to hospital care – backing NHS England's plan for the NHS.

Investment into the NHS will increase by £8 billion a year by the end of the Parliament. This is aimed to support the transformation of services across the country, including an increase in the number of GPs, faster access to new drugs and treatments and a greater focus on mental health and healthy living.

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BMA casts doubt on seven-day services plans.

Serious questions must be answered about the feasibility of Government commitments to create a seven-day NHS, the BMA has warned. The association made the warning in response to a speech by Prime Minister David Cameron in which he restated plans to increase yearly funding by £8bn by 2020 and expand seven-day services in England. BMA council chair Mark Porter has said it remained unclear as to how the services would be paid for when the £8bn was the 'bare minimum' needed to keep the NHS going.

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Survey finds most patients are positive about their hospital care, but many still experience delays when they leave.

A majority (84%) of respondents in the latest national survey of hospital inpatients published by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) rated their overall experience as seven or higher out of ten, with about one in four people rating it ten out of ten.

The latest survey – the twelfth time it has been carried out – is based on the replies of more than 59,000 people who stayed in one of 154 acute and specialist NHS trusts in England for at least one night during June, July or August 2014. The survey asked people about their experiences of the care and treatment they received, including: whether they were given enough information, whether they were involved in decisions about their care, whether there were enough nurses to care for them, whether the wards were noisy and clean and what arrangements were in place for when they left hospital.

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How can we afford the kind of care we all want?

Secretary of State for Health Jeremy Hunt has written about the need for delivering safer services and lower costs in the NHS. He writes that the high quality care everyone wants is possible, “but only if we care as much about every pound the NHS spends as every patient it treats. Because money wasted is money that can’t be spent on patients.” He draws parallels with the aviation and automotive industries to argue safer services cost less; and controlling costs funds safer services.

He also states that now the Government has committed to the £8 billion NHS England asked for, the time for debating whether or not it is enough is over. He therefore calls on the NHS to “deliver its side of the bargain, which is to make substantial and significant efficiency savings.”

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Clampdown on staffing agencies charging NHS extortionate rates.

Jeremy Hunt MP has set out a package of financial controls as a starting point for the NHS to begin making the substantial and significant efficiency savings promised in the Five Year Forward View. Financial controls include a maximum hourly rate for agency doctors and nurses, a ban on the use of agencies that are not on approved frameworks to make use of collective bargaining, and a cap on spending on agency staff for each NHS Trust in financial difficulty. He has also announced an approval requirement for consultancy contracts over £50,000.

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Five Year Forward View: Time to Deliver.

At the NHS Confederation conference on Thursday 4 June 2015, the seven principle national health bodies published ‘Five Year Forward View: Time to Deliver’.

'Time to Deliver' is primarily a tool for NHS managers. It looks at the progress made to date towards delivering the Five Year Forward View, and sets out the next steps we need to take if we are to achieve the shared ambitions within in. The paper kicks-starts a period of engagement with the NHS, patients and other partners on how we can respond to the long-term challenges and close the health and wellbeing gap; the care and quality gap; and the funding and efficiency gap.

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NHS England asks NICE to suspend safe staffing programme.

NHS England will now take forward the issue of staffing work as part of a wider programme of service improvement. It is looking at alternative approaches to helping NHS providers to achieve the right levels and mix of staff.

The chief executive of NHS England, Simon Stevens, told delegates at the NHS Confederation Annual Conference in Liverpool that they would review how staffing levels were determined across the NHS: "I have asked Jane Cummings, the chief nursing officer, to take a look at whether it would make more sense in respect of the new staffing guidelines that are being proposed for various parts of the health service, to instead remit that to our new urgent and emergency care vanguards and the mental health taskforce and various others – so a different approach to answering those questions."

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Scotland

New funding for active and independent living.

A new £3 million fund has been announced to enable active and independent living for people who are recovering from illness or injury.

The fund will be used to deliver the Active and Independent Living Programme over the next three years. It will aim to find new and innovative ways to help people with illness, disability or injury to lead healthy lives and stay in their own homes.

The programme will be delivered by Allied Health Professionals (AHPs). These are non-medical NHS staff such as occupational therapists, physiotherapists and podiatrists. They play a crucial role in the NHS by using advice, interventions, equipment and adaptations to help people live safely and healthily in their own homes for as long as possible.

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Fund for new medicines doubles.

The Scottish Government will double the amount of money available to fund treatments for people with rare or end-of-life conditions by increasing the New Medicines Fund to £80 million for 2015/16.

The New Medicines Fund, set up last year to expand and replace the Rare Conditions Medicines Fund, supports health boards to fund the cost of orphan, ultra-orphan and end-of-life drugs for patients.

This is the second year in a row that the Scottish Government has doubled the amount of money available to fund new medicines, with £20 million provided in 2013/14 and £40 million provided in 2014/15. The fund also supports changes to the way the Scottish Medicines Consortium (SMC) assesses medicines for use in NHS Scotland, which is resulting in an increasing number of treatments being approved for patients with very rare conditions or at end of life.

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Lung Cancer Quality Performance Indicators.

The report 'Lung Cancer Quality Performance Indicators' assesses performance against 12 Lung Cancer QPIs using clinical audit data relating to patients diagnosed with Lung cancer for the period from April 2013 to March 2014. This was the first year of QPI data collection.

The report finds that there were 4,766 people diagnosed with Lung Cancer in NHSScotland during April 2013 to March 2014, of which 980 were diagnosed in NOSCAN, 2,612 in WoSCAN and 1,174 in SCAN. It also finds that overall performance against the 12 Lung cancer QPIs is generally good across all NHS Boards; however no individual NHS Board met all 12 QPI targets. The 30 day mortality rate following treatment for lung cancer was generally low across Scotland with the exception of those patients receiving palliative chemotherapy where the mortality rate was almost 14% within 30 days.

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Hospital Based Complex Clinical Care.

New guidance to simplify and clarify the care arrangements for people with highly complex needs, has been published by the Scottish Government.

Announced last year, the revised guidance replaces existing arrangements for NHS Continuing Healthcare, which were subject to independent review in 2014. There are currently 385 people in Scotland in receipt of NHS Continuing Healthcare, who will continue to have their care fully funded by the NHS and will be unaffected by these changes.

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Northern Ireland

Health and social care in Northern Ireland cannot stand still - Hamilton.

Reform, transformation and innovation are key to delivering the best local health and social care sector. That was the message from the Health and Social Care Minister, Simon Hamilton as he delivered a keynote address outlining his vision for the future provision of health and social care in Northern Ireland.

Speaking during a visit to the Belfast Trust's Cancer Centre, the Minister said: "The difficulties the health and social care sector in Northern Ireland faces aren't unique to this country. There is a growing demand for the services the sector provides, yet we fall far short in terms of the resources required to meet that rising demand.

"A growing and aging population, a rise in chronic conditions, unhealthy lifestyles, technological advances and scarce resources is a heady cocktail that no health service has truly got to grips with yet. The challenge can sometimes seem insurmountable. Yet, in spite of the difficulties we face, I remain optimistic about the future of health and social care in Northern Ireland.

"In areas like the excellent work done in this Cancer Centre, in coronary care and in connected health, we can truly say that Northern Ireland is at the cutting edge of healthcare. But equally we cannot take our successes for granted or presume that because we excel in certain areas today that will always be the case."

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Wales

Survey shows improvement in Wales' health.

The number of adults smoking in Wales has fallen to the lowest ever level and other lifestyle habits are showing encouraging signs of improvement, a new survey on the nation's health shows.

A total of 14,000 adults and 3,000 children took part in the Welsh Health Survey 2014. It shows that smoking has fallen to its lowest ever level – 20% of adults reported they currently smoke, down from 21% in 2013 and 26% in 2003/04. The Welsh Government's aim is to reduce smoking prevalence levels to 16% by 2020.

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Ban on people smoking in cars carting children in Wales given go-ahead by AMs.

A ban on people smoking in cars when children under the age of 18 are present will be introduced on October 1, 2015 after it was approved by AMs. Health and Social Services Minister Mark Drakeford welcomed AMs' approval, hailing the ban as a major step forward for public health in Wales.

Exposure to second-hand smoke is a real and substantial threat to children's health. In the confined space of cars, children are more vulnerable to second-hand smoke because they breathe more rapidly and inhale more pollutants than adults. The new rules will make it an offence to smoke in an enclosed private vehicle with more than one person present, at least one of whom is under 18, and for a driver to fail to prevent smoking in such circumstances.

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