

POLICY UPDATE

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CANCER SUPPORT

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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 Aimee Leverett, on 020 7091 2486 or email aleverett@macmillan.org.uk.

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England

CQC appoints first National Guardian for the freedom to speak up in the NHS.

The CQC have appointed Dame Eileen Sills, the Chief Nurse at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, as the first National Guardian for whistleblowers in the NHS.

As the National Guardian for the freedom to speak up, Dame Eileen will help to lead a cultural change, initially within NHS trusts and NHS foundation trusts, so that healthcare staff always feel confident and supported to raise concerns about patient care.

The need for an independent National Guardian for the NHS was highlighted in Sir Robert Francis's Freedom to Speak Up review in February 2015, which found that patients could be put at risk of harm because vital information about mistakes and concerns was not being raised by NHS staff routinely.

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GPs and trusts face exorbitant CQC fees hike.

GPs and NHS Trusts face huge regulatory fee rises under proposals the BMA says could be devastating for the health service.

The plans proposed by the CQC (Care Quality Commission) could mean a sevenfold rise for GPs working in multiple locations and would mean practices in England paid a total of £40m a year to the regulator.

The association says these 'exorbitant' hikes are 'inexplicable' given that the CQC is looking to scale down its inspection process and warns of a potentially catastrophic effect on patient care for small GP practices, whose fees could rise from £725 to £4,839 in two years.

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Health service embracing innovation as NHS England announces major trials to improve patient care.

Older patients and people with long term conditions and mental health problems will be among the first to benefit from a major new drive to modernise how the NHS delivers care.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, NHS England Chief Executive Simon Stevens announced the launch of the first wave of NHS Innovation 'Test Beds'.

'Test Beds' will be collaborations between the NHS and innovators – including Verily (formerly Google Life Sciences), IBM and Philips, which aim to harness technology to address some of the most complex issues facing patients and the health service.

Frontline health and care workers in seven areas will pioneer and evaluate the use of novel combinations of interconnected devices such as wearable monitors, data analysis and ways of working which will help patients stay well and monitor their conditions themselves at home.

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NHS England widens access to life-extending treatment for prostate cancer.

Patients first diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer will now get immediate access to a drug which studies have shown can extend their life by more than a year compared to current options, NHS England has announced.

Following a review of evidence from two trials published late last year, specialists will now be able to prescribe the chemotherapy drug Docetaxel as soon as someone is diagnosed with incurable prostate cancer. Under previous guidelines, patients had to wait until it was clear that existing, hormone-based treatments had stopped having an effect.

The two randomised control trials published in 2015 found that, compared with androgen deprivation therapy (ADT) alone, docetaxel combined with ADT improved overall survival by up to 15 months.

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Scotland

Realistic approach to medicine needed, says Scotland's CMO.

Scotland's newly appointed Chief Medical Officer has called for a debate among doctors about 'realistic medicine'.

Catherine Calderwood, who took up the post last year, used her first annual report to say she wanted to engage the profession in a dialogue on the role doctors can play in shaping health services.

In her report, Dr Calderwood also acknowledges the pressures facing doctors — a statement which has been welcomed by the BMA.

However, the BMA in Scotland pointed out that rising workload impacted on doctors' ability to respond to the needs of a changing healthcare service.

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Fall in delayed discharge.

Official figures show the number of days patients spent in hospital due to 'Delayed Discharge' in November fell by 13 per cent compared to the same time last year.

This comes as the Scottish Government is investing an additional £2 million to tackle delayed discharge in Edinburgh. The one-off payment to the health and social care

partnership will aim to bring significant reductions in delays over the coming months, through additional interim care beds; additional staffing; development of locality hubs to enable timely discharge; and the introduction of Clinical Support Workers.

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Major GP test pilot launched in Inverclyde.

A major project to test new ways of structuring primary care services has been launched in Inverclyde.

The pilot will look at how the role of the GP can be refocused, reducing the time they spend on tasks that could more appropriately be done by other health professionals and examining how these staff can support patients in the community.

The project involves at least 15 GP practices serving nearly 80,000 people and will see professionals working together in clusters, improving resource and staff planning and enhancing links to other health services.

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Northern Ireland

Hamilton announces biggest investment in general practice training for over 10 years.

On a visit to Saintfield Health Centre today, Health Minister Simon Hamilton announced the biggest investment in GP training for over 10 years.

The Minister said: “This investment of £1.2million per year in 20 additional GP training places is the most significant investment in GP training in over a decade. Northern Ireland has the best GP workforce in the world, but also the oldest in the UK. With increasing demand from an ageing population it is vital we continue to invest in our workforce if we are to ensure people can get an appointment with their GP when they need to.”

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Northern Ireland waiting times.

Waiting times for patients accessing cancer services at hospitals in Northern Ireland during July, August and September 2015 were released yesterday.

In September 2015, 358 patients commenced treatment for cancer following an urgent referral for suspect cancer. Of these, over two thirds (69.6%, 249 out of 358) commenced their first treatment within 62 days.

In September 2015, 805 patients commenced treatment for cancer in Northern Ireland, following a decision to treat being taken. Of these 805 patients, 776

(96.4%) commenced their first treatment within 31 days of the decision to treat being taken.

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Wales

Cancer survival rates in Wales continue to improve.

More people are being diagnosed with cancer in Wales, but more people than ever are being treated and survival rates are at an all-time high, a new report about cancer care has shown.

The fourth all-Wales annual report for cancer sets out the progress made against the Welsh Government's Together for Health – Cancer Delivery Plan over the last 12 months and identifies areas for future improvement.

It shows the number of people diagnosed with cancer is increasing. In 2013-14, 19,000 people were diagnosed with cancer, an increase of 11.5% compared to 10 years ago.

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Welsh company wins €420,000 EU investment to take part in ground-breaking cell therapy project.

Finance and Government Business Minister Jane Hutt has welcomed the news that a Welsh company has been awarded €420,000 from the European Commission to bring its expertise to an international project aimed at developing technology that could change the way cancer is treated.

The funding for the project comes from the European Commission's largest research and innovation programme, Horizon 2020 – worth around £65 billion across EU Member States, which aims to make breakthroughs, discoveries and world-firsts in science and innovation.

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£2.5m to tackle delayed transfers from Welsh hospitals.

New measures to tackle delayed transfers of care in the Welsh NHS have been unveiled by Health and Social Services Minister Mark Drakeford.

£2.5m will support a series of measures to reduce the number of people – the majority are older people – who are unable to leave hospital for social care reasons, freeing up hospital beds for patients who need them.

The most recent statistics show 435 people experienced a delayed transfer of care in December 2015 - the third consecutive month there has been a reduction in the number of delays.

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End-of-life essentials: a question of ethics.

The BMA has hosted forums around the UK to explore people's attitudes towards end-of-life care in order to inform future policy.

The BMA sought to explore the views and perceptions surrounding EOLC (end-of-life care), as well as gauge opinion on the potential impact of PAD (physician-assisted dying) upon the doctor-patient relationship in a hypothetical situation in which PAD might be legalised in the future.

BMA representative body chair Ian Wilson says: 'The UK has led the world in developing comprehensive and holistic care for people whose lives are coming to an end.'

Yet this new research provides further evidence that the provision of end-of-life care remains variable, dependent on a patient's geographical location, their condition and their knowledge of local services.'

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