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Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Bulletin No. 26 / 25 June 2010

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Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Information

Date of next HOSC meeting: Friday 23 July 2010, 10.00 am.

Location: Council Chamber, Sessions House.

Main Agenda Items:

- 1) Diagnostics - Waiting Times.
- 2) Update on Health and Transport.

Internal Meetings:

HOSC Agenda Planning Meeting: Friday 23 July 2010, 14:30 - 16:30

Location: Darent Room, Sessions House.

Health in Kent

Four Square Ace fever in Gravesham

Primary school children in the Gravesham area have been gripped by Four Square Ace fever, a fast-paced game which involves pupils bouncing a ball between them on a grid.

Four Square Ace was introduced to the area by Jason Owen, a specialist teacher working for Kent County Council, and who won the Times Educational Supplement Outstanding Sporting Initiative award last week.

Sarah Hohler, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education, at Kent County Council said: "It is very important that children take part in games. This helps their physical well-being and promotes teamwork. I congratulate Jason for his hard work and hope he is an inspiration to others."

See:

[Playground game is just ace](#)

Former chief executive of Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust wins damages

Rose Gibb, formerly chief executive of Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, has been awarded more than £190,000 in damages.

Ms. Gibb, who left her job days before the release of a highly critical report into the clostridium difficile (C. diff) outbreak at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust in which 90 people died, went to the Court of Appeal in a legal battle over her severance pay.

See:

[Kent bug scandal NHS boss awarded damages](#)

Department of Health

Business expenses for DOH Permanent Secretaries, Directors General and non-executive directors

The Department of Health (DOH) has set out the business expenses for all of the Department's Permanent Secretaries, Directors General and our Non-Executive Directors, incurred in pursuit of the Department's aims and objectives, are set out in the documents below. They also contain information about the provision and receipt of hospitality.

See:

[DH business expenses](#)

Letter abolishing four hour waiting standard in Accident and Emergency

In a letter from The Secretary of State for Health, Andrew Lansley to the President of the college for Emergency Medicine, the Minister has abolished the four hour waiting standard in Accident and Emergency.

See:

[Abolition of the four hour waiting standard in Accident and Emergency](#)

Amended letter regarding the annual seasonal influenza immunisation programme

An amended letter, with an erratum dated June 2010 and containing information about the annual seasonal influenza immunisation programme for winter 2010/11, including influenza immunisation for frontline health and social care staff, and the poultry worker immunisation programme has been circulated. The letter supersedes the previous letter sent in May 2010.

See:

[PL/CMO/2010/01, PL/CNO/2010/01, PL/CPHO/2010/01: The influenza immunisation programme 2010/11](#)

DOH summary of consumer insight research on breastfeeding and the introduction of solid foods

A Department of Health (DOH) report '[Breastfeeding and introducing solid foods: consumer insight summary](#)' is a summary of consumer insight research carried out into breastfeeding and the introduction of solid foods by the Department of Health, strategic health authorities and primary care trusts in England.

The summary draws on a range of consumer insight research reports supplemented by academic papers, and is designed to pool knowledge of the barriers to and insights into breastfeeding, and insights into the introduction of solid foods, along with recommended interventions where appropriate.

Revision to the Operating Framework for the NHS in England, 2010/11

The Department of Health (DOH) has published '[Revision to the Operating Framework for the NHS in England 2010/11](#)' which sets out a number of areas subject to immediate change. These areas reflect the Government's ambition to move towards a health service which puts patients at the heart of decision-making, which focuses on quality and outcomes, not processes, and with more devolved responsibilities.

See:

[Revision to the Operating Framework for the NHS in England 2010/11](#)
[Everyone has role to play as NHS faces finance squeeze](#)

Best practice guidance 'Mobile working readiness assessment framework'

The Department of Health (DOH) has published a best practice guidance 'The mobile working readiness assessment framework' which is key to enabling community services better prepare themselves to adopting or improving information and the current utilisation of mobile solutions.

See:

[Mobile Working Readiness Assessment Framework](#)

Data showing the number of first attendances to a Genito-urinary medicine (GUM) clinic for each clinic provider

The Department of Health (DOH) has released data which shows the number of first attendances to a Genito-urinary medicine (GUM) clinic for each clinic provider, how many of these attendances were offered an appointment within 48 hours and how many were seen within 48 hours. Main findings are:

- The percentage of 1st appointments offered within 48 hours was 100.0% for April 2010, it was 99.9% for March 2010.
- The percentage of 1st attendances seen within 48 hours as a proportion of the total number of 1st attendances was 88.1% for April 2010, it was 88.1% for March 2010.
- The total number of 1st attendances was 115,775 in April 2010 which is 5,789 per working day, it was 5,666 per working day in March 2010.
- The total number of attendances was 165,770 in April 2010 which is 8,289 per working day, it was 8,168 per working day in March 2010.
- The collection covers 143 NHS providers and 1 Independent Sector provider that are responsible for 203 GUM clinics providing type 3 services.

See:

[Statistical Press notice: Access to GUM services](#)

DOH response to NICE guidance on smoking in pregnancy and childbirth

The Department of Health (DOH) has replied to the report from the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) '[How to stop smoking in pregnancy and following childbirth](#)'

See:

[Response to NICE guidance on pregnant women smoking](#)

NHS response on report which looks at allergy service provision within the NHS

A report 'Still not meeting the unmet need' from the joint Working Party of the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Pathologists, supported by the British Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology has reviewed the changes that have been made to service provision since the publication of the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee report into allergy in 2007.

For all the relevant documents:-

See:

[Allergy services](#)
[Response to RCP report on allergy treatment](#)

DOH response to NICE guidance on cardiovascular disease

The Department of Health (DOH) has responded to the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance on cardiovascular disease.

See:

[Prevention of cardiovascular disease at population level](#)

[Response to NICE guidance on cardiovascular disease](#)

Government

Joint report explores what needs to happen if GPs are to be given responsibility for leading commissioning in the NHS

A report [‘Giving GPs budgets for commissioning: what needs to be done?’](#) which is published jointly by six organisations that have joined forces to inform the Coalition Government’s aim of devolving commissioning power to GPs explores what needs to happen if GPs are to be given responsibility for leading commissioning in the NHS, and also outlines the opportunities that this new policy direction presents.

But the report also warns that evidence from the UK and overseas suggests the policy will take time to develop, and that there will be significant challenges in engaging more than an enthusiastic minority of GPs, reversing avoidable use of costly hospital care, and shifting resources into the community.

Further details are expected in a White Paper due to be published in early July

See also:

[Giving GPs budgets for commissioning: what needs to be done?](#)

[Coalition Government plans to hand real budgets to GPs could help the NHS save money and respond to rising demand, but significant challenges lie ahead](#)

Andrew Lansley keynote speech ‘Shifting the power to the front-line’

Andrew Lansley, the Secretary of State for Health delivered a speech ‘Shifting the power to the front-line’ at the NHS Confederation annual conference which set out how a vision for patient-centred care will propel the NHS, the professionals and the front-line through the unique and challenging times ahead.

The Minister argued that the coalition government has agreed to increase health spending in each year of this Parliament. This commitment reflects the increasing demand on services, but does not negate the necessity to make the tough choices that are required in order to meet the scale of the demand and to drive up quality improvements.

See:

[Health Secretary speech to the NHS Confederation Conference 2010](#)

[Health Secretary speech to NHS Confederation](#)

An Audit Commission briefing suggests ways of utilising staff to make savings and cut costs

An Audit Commission ‘Delivering more for less’ briefing, [‘Making the most of NHS frontline staff’](#) argues that in the savings that will be required, there is potential for NHS trusts and foundation trusts to identify ways to utilise frontline staff by varying nurse numbers, use of bank and agency nurses and mixing grades making savings, improving productivity and reducing costs.

See:

An Audit Commission efficiency briefing looks at the scope for improving the efficiency of the acute care pathway in adult mental health

In the first of a new series of 'delivering more for less' efficiency briefings, which looks at areas of the NHS where analysis of local and national data indicates savings could be achieved, the Audit Commission asks what scope there is for improving the efficiency of the acute care pathway in adult mental health, while maximising quality.

The Commission argue that as a starting point, data shows there is wide variation between the use of inpatient beds and bed-days, and spending on crisis resolution and home treatment teams. But in addition, mental health trusts and primary care trusts need to work together to understand the detail behind the headline figures.

See:

[Maximising resources in adult mental health](#)

The Government is committed to continuing and extending psychological therapies

The Secretary of State for Health, Andrew Lansley, has announced that psychological therapies will continue to be rolled out across the NHS in the coming year and outlined plans to take forward the Government's commitment to increase access to services by pledging £70 million over the next year to ensure services can continue to run for this year and that new services can be established.

As an effective treatment for common mental health conditions like depression and anxiety disorders, psychological therapies are internationally recognised and have the advantage that they can be used as an alternative or alongside medication to drive more effective prescribing.

See:

[Psychological therapies offered across the NHS](#)

Joint briefing looks at proposed improvements in efficiencies in cancer care

A briefing '[Coordinated cancer care](#)' which is published jointly by the NHS Confederation and Macmillan Cancer Support, looks at how improvements in efficiencies can be achieved by focusing on reducing waste while also providing high-quality supportive care.

See:

[Better treatments and recession can lead to better cancer care](#)

Report encourages collaboration between health and social care

A new joint NHS Confederation and Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) report '[Where next for health and social care integration?](#)' which was launched at the NHS Confederation annual conference, proposes that changes to the commissioning of health services could encourage more bottom up collaboration of health and social care and greater working between frontline health and social care staff in England.

See:

[Real appetite for increased integration in health and social care](#)

[Where next for health and social care integration?](#)

A new paper argues that to meet efficiency savings it is better to learn from previous NHS restructures.

A paper published at the NHS Confederation annual conference '[The triumph of hope over experience: lessons from the history of re-organisation](#)' warns policymakers and NHS leaders to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past by rushing to reorganise and restructure the NHS without ensuring that there is a sound evidence base before embarking on major change.

See:

[The triumph of hope over experience](#)

[Hopeful reorganisations should not triumph over experience, warns NHS Confederation](#)

NHS Confederation response to the Emergency Budget

The NHS Confederation acting chief executive

Nigel Edwards has responded to the Emergency Budget, by saying the figures reiterated the scale of the challenge facing the NHS, and arguing that the priority for the NHS will be in making tough decisions over service redesign to improve services for patients.

See:

[NHS Confederation comment on today's budget announcement](#)

Parliament

State pension

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, in the Emergency Budget said the Coalition Government would 'accelerate the increase in the state pension age to 66.'

The Government has launched a call for evidence to support its review of the timetable and will publish its response in the autumn. If the review finds the existing timetable is no longer appropriate, a *Pensions and Savings Bill* is to implement the findings.

The main proposed benefits are that an earlier increase would help ensure the affordability of the State Pension, including the restoration of the link between earnings and the basic State Pension.

See:

[Pension age](#)

Other Health Information

Joseph Rowntree study on the problem of illicit drugs

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2001 began a programme of research that explored the problem of illicit drugs in the UK, and more particularly, addressed many questions that were often too sensitive for the Government to tackle.

The Foundation has now published a study '[Drugs research: an overview of evidence and questions for policy](#)' which gives an overview of the projects in the programme. The topics covered include:

- The policing of drug possession.
- The domestic cultivation, purchasing and heavy use of cannabis.
- Non-problematic heroin use, heroin prescription and Drug Consumption Rooms.
- The impact of drugs on the family.
- Drug testing in schools and in the workplace

KPMG make a case for telehealth

KPMG has released a paper '[Switch on!: the case for telehealth](#)' which argues that telehealth, the equipment and services used to remotely monitor aspects of a person's health in their own home, can give an accurate and regular picture of a patient's health, and by redesigning care pathways can be incorporated to achieve effective ways of delivering health care.

KPMG looks at the case for a more integrated health care

KPMG has released a paper '[A bold step forward: the case of integrated care in the UK](#)' which argues that by shifting the focus of care from secondary treatment to longer-term health, and adopting an integrated care approach, the NHS can achieve its dual goals of improving health outcomes and cutting costs.

WCRF research indicates that high levels of B vitamins may reduce the risk of lung cancer

The World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) has funded research which indicates that people with high levels of B-vitamins in their blood may be at reduced risk of lung cancer.

The research by scientists at the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), which has been published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA), found that a sample of people, which included smokers, non-smokers and ex-smokers, but with above average levels of Vitamin B6 and methionine, a related nutrient, are half as likely to develop the disease. In addition, those in the sample who displayed high levels of vitamins B6 and folate as well high levels of methionine, had a two-thirds lower risk of lung cancer.

But WCRF also warn that while the findings are being seen as significant, more research is needed before scientists can be confident and understand why increasing levels of B-vitamins in the diet seems to reduce risk of lung cancer.

See:

[B Vitamin levels linked to reduced lung cancer risk](#)

Equality and Human Rights Commission inquiry into disability-related harassment

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is undertaking an inquiry into disability-related harassment and how well this is currently being addressed by public authorities.

The Commission is taking evidence, and wants to hear from anyone who has been harassed and from organisations that work for/with them, including voluntary and community sector organisations, public authorities (such as local councils, police, housing, social services and education) and public transport operators.

The deadline for providing evidence is Friday 10 September, 2010.

See:

[Inquiry into disability related harassment](#)

[Call for Evidence](#)

A British research team warns that the population's health could suffer if welfare budgets are cut.

Writing in this week's BMJ, the researchers put forward analysis they have made from European data which indicates that cuts in welfare lead to a rise in alcohol-related deaths and deaths from heart disease. The figures also point out a 1.19% rise in deaths for every £70 drop in spending per person.

The study's leader said that, whilst health spending has been ring-fenced, welfare spending may, in fact, be more important to the state of the nation's health.

See:

['Welfare Cuts put added Health Strain on Population'](#)

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