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Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Bulletin No. 50 / 11 December 2009

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The Department of Health (DOH) has launched a consultation [‘Strengthening national commissioning’](#) which seeks views from the NHS, industry and other stakeholders on the **Government's proposals for an incremental development of some of the arrangements proposed in the Carter Review; in particular reshaping the membership and role of the National Commissioning Group (NCG).**

The complete set of consultation documents are available on the [DOH publications](#) webpage.

(See also:

[New arrangements to make treatments for very rare conditions available nationally](#)

Launched: 11 December, 2009.

Closing: 13 February, 2010.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has launched a consultation around registration regulations under the Care Standards Act.

The purpose of [this consultation](#) is to gather views on revised regulations covering the registration arrangements for children's homes, fostering agencies, independent adoption agencies, adoption support agencies and residential family centres. The current registration regulations for these establishments also cover adult and health settings. However, the Health and Social Care Act 2008 will remove adult and health settings from the Care Standards Act 2001. The revised regulations being consulted on here therefore only cover children's social settings.

The online consultation was launched yesterday and continues until Tuesday 2nd March 2010.

The Government have announced details of their new internet safety strategy: "Zip it, tag it, block it".

[The strategy will outline](#) how government, industry and charities are working together to keep children and young people safe online and implement the recommendations from Professor Tanya Byron's review [Safer Children in a Digital World](#). The strategy will mean:

- Internet companies, charities and the government will be independently reviewed against new UKCCIS ([UK Council for Child Internet Safety](#)) standards to keep children and young people safe online.
- Young people and parents will be targeted by a consistent and recognisable new Digital Code "Zip it, Block it, Flag it" – the Green Cross Code for internet safety. This will be adopted by retailers, social networking sites, schools and charities and displayed where appropriate.
- Parents will be able to access a one-stop shop website for internet safety advice hosted by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre ([CEOP](#)).
- From September 2011 online safety will be a compulsory part of the curriculum from age 5.

The council's progress will be reviewed by Dr Tanya Byron starting in January next year. Read the report from the UKCIS: [Clever Click Safe: The First Child Internet Safety Strategy](#) (See also:

[Staying Safe Survey 2009: young people and parents' attitudes around Internet safety](#)

Health Minister Ann Keen has announced that a new MRSA objective will focus progress on trusts that need to improve the most. The initiative will build on the national target set by the NHS in 2004 which has indicated that nationally there has been a 76% reduction in MRSA rates, which is higher than the original target of 50%. The new objective will require organisations with the highest rates to make the biggest reductions and challenge the best performers to sustain their low rates and strive for further reductions where possible.

(See:

[New MRSA objective reflects NHS zero tolerance approach to infections](#)

[MRSA objective: stakeholder engagement, summary of responses](#)

[MRSA Objective for 2010-11](#)

[MRSA objective: stakeholder engagement, summary of responses](#)

The Department of Health (DOH) have published the '[National Innovation Procurement Plan](#)' which describes describes the importance of innovation procurement in underpinning quality, productivity and sustainability in the NHS, and details the methodology by which innovation will be identified, procured, adopted and diffused across the NHS. An important commitment in the White Paper, Innovation Nation (March 2008), was for each Government Department to include an Innovation Procurement Plan (IPP) as part of its commercial strategy, setting out how the Department will embed innovation in its procurement practices and seek to use innovative procurement mechanisms.

The Department of Health (DOH) have published the '[Autumn performance report, 2009](#)' in line with their annual HM Treasury requirement. The report details progress made on the 44 indicators measuring the Department's Departmental Strategic Objectives and two Public Service Agreements, agreed for the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07). It also reports on progress made against the CSR07 Value for Money target from the work on the Operational Efficiency Programme, Public Value Programme and QIPP.

The King's Fund have produced a report '[Windmill 2009: NHS response to the financial storm](#)' which argues that now the prospects for future funding of the NHS look bleak, a new

behavioural simulation, Windmill 2009 could offer the analysis of what will be required if health and social care systems are to respond effectively to the major challenges that lie ahead.

(See also:

[Windmill 2009: NHS response to the financial storm: press release.](#)

[Health leaders must be honest about financial challenges ahead](#)

The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) has issued guidance [‘Promoting mental wellbeing at work’](#) for those who have a direct or indirect role in, and responsibility for promoting mental wellbeing at work. The guidance focuses on interventions to promote mental wellbeing through productive and healthy working conditions

(See:

[Guidance for employers on promoting mental wellbeing through productive and healthy working conditions](#)

[Summary](#)

The Health Protection Agency (HPA) report [‘Hepatitis C in the UK – 2009’](#) summarises current knowledge about hepatitis C and the action being taken to tackle the infection, and reports the latest figures indicate more than 8,000 people were diagnosed with hepatitis C last year in England. Figures from the agency's yearly report on Hepatitis C for 2009 show that laboratory reporting of newly diagnosed hepatitis C infections in England increased in 2008 by 6% compared to 2007, with 8,196 new cases reported in 2008.

It is estimated that currently around 185,000 individuals in the UK are chronically infected with hepatitis C (142,000 in England & Wales, 39,000 in Scotland and 4,000 in Northern Ireland); these individuals are at risk of developing serious liver disease.

(See also:

[Hepatitis C in the UK: 2009 report](#)

The Health Secretary has launched the new NHS strategy for 2010-2015 which talks of the need to speed up reform to bring in improvements to quality of care.

The measures covered in [‘NHS 2010-2015: from good to great. Preventative, people-centred, productive’](#) include:

- Linking up to 10% of hospital income to patient satisfaction
- Abolition of GP boundaries
- Dedicated carers for people with serious long-term conditions
- Personal Health budgets and more access to personal care plans
- The right for everyone aged between 40 and 74 to have a legal right to a health check on the NHS every five years.

(Also see the [DoH press release](#) .

The Government is preparing to announce a major shift in mental health policy in England with a new emphasis on tackling and preventing depression.

The 10-year strategy is expected to call for better identification of those most at risk and wider access to psychological therapies for patients. The [BBC reports](#) that the strategy, to be published on Monday, is expected to say that depression is as big a problem as heart disease. Sources say the ambitions of the plans to prevent and treat depression are unprecedented in Europe. Professor Louis Appleby, the government's mental health tsar, said at any one time one in six people were struggling with depression, but only a quarter of those people were in treatment. He said: "We need to be better at preventing depression, better at treating it and better at reducing the impact of depression."

It is not clear what, if any, funding will be available to back the plans.

The Department of Health (DOH) have published the annual [‘Department of Health autumn performance report 2009’](#) which details progress made on the 44 indicators measuring the departmental strategic objectives and two public service agreements agreed for the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review. It also reports on progress made against the CSR07 value for money target from the work on the operational efficiency programme, public value programme and quality, innovation, productivity and prevention.

See also:

[Department of Health autumn performance report 2009](#)

The House of Commons Library has published a Standard Note [‘Driving: alcohol’](#) which sets out the offences associated with driving and drinking; the power to make random tests; the Government's view on the blood-alcohol level and the position in other European states.

The Organisation for the Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have published [‘Health at a Glance 2009 – OECD Indicators’](#) which reports the performance of health systems in OECD countries, and provides striking evidence of large variations across countries in the costs, activities and results of health systems. Key indicators provide information on health status, the determinants of health, health care activities and health expenditure and financing in OECD countries.

From the report, the Daily Telegraph indicates that Britain has among worst cancer survival rates in developed world Britain came in second bottom of its bowel cancer survival league table, with only patients in the Czech Republic less likely to be alive five years after diagnosis. The survival rate in Britain was 51.6 per cent, compared with an OECD average of 57.4 per cent and 65.5 per cent in the US.

(See:

[Health at a Glance 2009](#)

Also see:

[Britain has among worst cancer survival rates in developed world](#)

A study by researchers at the University of California indicates that a [food sweetener could be ‘fuelling’ childhood diabetes](#). The new findings suggest that the sweetener fructose, a cheap sugar substitute found in thousands of processed foods and soft drinks, may be increasing childhood diabetes and the obesity crisis.

The House of Commons Library have released a Standard Note [‘Health Act 2009 - Tobacco control provisions’](#) which provides a summary of the new tobacco controls and the background to them.

The Criminal Justice and Immigration Act, 2008 provides [new powers for the NHS to deal with low level anti-social behaviour](#). The Act creates a new criminal offence of causing a nuisance or disturbance on NHS hospital premises and refusing to leave - and a new power for authorised NHS staff to remove a person suspected of committing this offence. Martin Wiles of the NHS Security Management Service (NHS SMS), said: ‘These new provisions reinforce the range of measures already in place to protect NHS staff, allowing them to concentrate on delivering patient care. The legislation will help prevent low level disruptive behaviour from escalating to violence against staff by focusing on the minority of people who cause a nuisance in hospital premises.’

The [NHS has launched an investigation into thefts](#), amid reports criminals see the service as an "easy target".

Among the items snatched have been ambulance satellite navigation systems, patients' belongings and hospital equipment and laptops.

The NHS Security Management Service believes the health service is vulnerable because large parts of its estate have to be open to the public.

It wants to see if extra measures need to be put in place to improve security.

Figures show there have been 57 "high-value claims" - those worth more than £20,000 - over the past five years.

A study by the University of Cambridge which has been published in the journal *Brain* indicates that there is evidence that [self-awareness is a big problem for people with autism](#).

The study used sophisticated scans which indicated that the brains of people with autism are less active when engaged in self-reflective thought, and the findings could provide a neurological insight into why people with autism tend to struggle in social situations.

The BBC reports that a major trial of a [vaginal microbicide](#) has produced no evidence that its use reduces the risk of HIV infection in women. The gel, PRO 2000, is intended for use before sexual intercourse to help reduce HIV infection, and was tested in a trial involving 9,385 women in four African countries. But the risk of HIV infection was not significantly different among women supplied with the gel than in women given a placebo gel.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) have published guidance for all health and adult social care providers on meeting new essential standards of quality and safety that will apply across the care sector. The guidance assists the providers who must show they are meeting essential standards as part of a new registration system which focuses on people rather than policies, on outcomes rather than systems.

The essential standards relate to important aspects of care such as involvement and information for people, personalised care and treatment, safety and safeguarding. Subject to legislation, the new registration system comes into force for NHS trusts on 1 April 2010 and for adult social care and independent healthcare providers on 1 October 2010. CQC will continuously monitor compliance with essential standards as part of a more dynamic, responsive, robust system of regulation accompanied by new enforcement powers.

(See:

[Complying with the new regulations](#)

[Guidance on meeting new essential standards of quality and safety](#)

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