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## Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Bulletin No. 1 / Friday 1 January 2010

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**Health Secretary Andy Burnham has launched a consultation [‘NHS Car Parking: consultation on Improving Access for Patients’](#) which aims to provide the implementation of free inpatient car parking for inpatients. parking to patients.** The consultation outlines a range of options, designed to provide fairer hospital car parking for patients, including:

- Giving all inpatients free hospital car parking for their visitors, or only after a long stay.
- Giving access to free parking for outpatients who need to attend a series of appointments, or placing a cap on charges for priority outpatient groups who attend regular hospital appointments.

The Minister argues that each inpatient would receive a permit for the length of their stay, which family and friends can use. The consultation also provides options for looking at providing better subsidised charges for priority outpatient groups, such as cancer patients and those attending multiple outpatient appointments, which would also be phased in over the next three years, as efficiency savings are re-invested back into the NHS.

For all the consultation documents:-

(See:

[NHS Car Parking: Consultation on Improving Access for Patients](#)

[Fairer NHS car parking charges](#)

[Options to end hospital parking charges](#)

**The consultation began on 29 December 2009.**

**The consultation ends on 23 February 2010.**

The think tank Policy Exchange have published a report [‘Which Doctor? Putting patients in control of primary care’](#) which proposes a radical new framework to tackle the inequality of primary health care provision. The proposals recommend that the majority of NHS funding

(£84.4 billion in 2010–11) be distributed on the basis of a patients' age and postcodes, and that GPs be financially incentivised to set up practices in areas of most need through a 'patient premium'.

**Doctors for Reform have published a paper [‘E-health of white elephant?: doctors’ views on the National Programme for Information Technology’](#)** an-depth analyses about Information Technology in the NHS to include feedback and comments from working clinicians.

(See also:

[Doctors for Reform news and reports](#)

**The Times reports that ‘hundreds of millions of pounds’ of charity donations to hospitals are to be ‘nationalised’ under an NHS accounting change of rules which will impel all NHS donations, including those to specialist children and cancer units, local fundraising campaigns, teaching hospitals and local community trusts to be listed on a hospital’s balance sheet.** About £330 million was given to 300 NHS charities in the year to June 2008, and they control an estimated £2 billion of assets.

Critics argue that this will make it easier to slash health budgets, and charities also fear that the change, due to come into effect in April, will be used as a smokescreen to hide cuts in health spending, with Ministers reducing funds for organisations such as children’s hospitals that have successful charitable arms.

The Charities Commission says that these changes are ‘wholly inappropriate’, because combining the trust and charity accounts will jeopardise the charity’s autonomy and discourage donations. A spokeswoman for the Commission said: ‘The Charity Commission does not agree with the interpretation of the accounting rules in the Department of Health letter to NHS bodies.

We are currently engaging with the Department on this matter.’

(See:

[Ministers ‘to take control’ of hospital charity cash](#)

**The BBC report that a study indicates that the number of people in England having a limb amputated because of type-two diabetes has risen dramatically, but conversely, the number of amputations in people with type-one diabetes has dropped.** The researchers from Imperial College, London found that between 1996 and 2005, below-ankle amputations doubled to more than 2,000, and major amputations increased by 43%. Writing in the journal *Diabetes Research and Clinical Practice*, the researchers said the number of the most major amputations, above the ankle joint, had risen by 43% and the average age of those having above-ankle amputations fell from 71 to 69 years, which followed the pattern of people being diagnosed younger. The researchers argue that this partly explains their findings, because the number of people diagnosed with type-two diabetes had increased greatly in the past decade.

In the UK, 2.35 million people have type-two diabetes, which is caused by the body not properly responding to the insulin it produces, and is often a result of lifestyle factors such as obesity. A charity said more early diagnosis was needed, as diabetes can go undetected for more than 10 years.

(See:

[Type-two diabetes limb amputations rise dramatically](#)

**The BBC report that German researchers writing in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, argue that individually designed music therapy may help reduce the noise levels experienced by people who suffer from tinnitus.** The researchers altered

participants' favourite music to remove notes which matched the frequency of the ringing in their ears, and discovered that after a year of listening to the modified music, individuals reported a drop in the loudness of their tinnitus.

The researchers said the "inexpensive" treatment could be used alongside other techniques to relieve the condition.

See:

[Music therapy 'may help cut tinnitus noise levels'](#)

[Listening to tailor-made notched music reduces tinnitus loudness and tinnitus-related auditory cortex activity: abstract](#)

**The BBC reports that researchers from Nottingham University have discovered how, Cordycepin a promising cancer drug first extracted from a wild mushroom, functions within the body to treat cancers.** The research team believe their work could help make the drug more effective, and useful for treating a wider range of cancers.

Researcher Dr Cornelia de Moor said: 'Our discovery will open up the possibility of investigating the range of different cancers that could be treated with cordycepin, and it will be possible to predict what types of cancers might be sensitive and what other cancer drugs it may effectively combine with.'

(See:

[Scientists discover how wild mushroom cancer drug works](#)

**A new report '[Substance misuse among young people: the data for 2008-09](#)' published by the National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse (NTA) indicates that more teenagers in England who need help for problems involving drug and alcohol use are receiving it, but fewer have problems severe enough to require treatment for addiction.** In addition, the report also indicates that the number of teenagers entering treatment for heroin and crack has fallen by a third in four years and this echoes the trend already seen in young adults (aged 18-24) in drug treatment.

The report also indicates that the overall number of under-18s accessing specialist substance misuse services in England during 2008/9 was 24,053, an increase of just 150 over 2007/8, and indicates that demand for such services is levelling out. The vast majority of these young people are receiving help for problems associated with the misuse of cannabis and/or alcohol, which are treated with structured counselling.

(See:

[Positive signs that teenagers increasingly shun the most problematic drugs](#)

**The New Policy Institute and The Joseph Rowntree Foundation have produced the twelfth annual report of indicators of poverty and social exclusion in the United Kingdom.** '[Monitoring poverty and social exclusion 2009](#)' provides a comprehensive analysis of trends and differences between groups. This is the first report to be written in an economic downturn, and the recession is the focus of much of the analysis.

(See also:

[Monitoring poverty and social exclusion 2009: executive summary](#)  
[United Kingdom indicators](#)

**The BBC report that researchers in Galway have discovered that disinfectants could effectively train bacteria to become resistant to antibiotics.** Writing in the journal *Microbiology*, the National University of Ireland team, who focused on a common hospital

bacterium, found that by adding increasing amounts of disinfectant to cultures of pseudomonas aeruginosa in the lab, the bacteria learnt to resist not only the disinfectant but also ciprofloxacin - a commonly-prescribed antibiotic - even without being exposed to it. The scientists urge a rethink of how infections are managed, and argue that there is an increasing body of research that raises concerns about the effects on antibiotic resistance of disinfectants and antiseptics.

(See:

[Disinfectants 'train' superbugs to resist antibiotics](#)

**New British Heart Foundation (BHF) funded research** from the University of Oxford shows that a type of cholesterol called Lipoprotein(a) definitely plays a role in causing heart disease. The study, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, could add new medicines to doctors' toolkits for preventing heart disease, and open new avenues of research for treatments.

Lipoprotein(a), or Lp(a), has been associated with heart disease since the 1990s, but until now it has not been possible to distinguish whether it actually causes heart disease. The study which analysed the genes of nearly 16,000 people from the UK and across Europe has provided evidence that two variations of the gene for Lp(a) are strongly linked to heart disease risk, indicating a causal role in disease development.

(See:

[Convincing evidence that a third type of cholesterol plays a role in causing heart disease](#)

**A new NHS report '[NHS Maternity Statistics, England 2008-09: Headline Tables](#)'** highlights the wide variation in caesarean rates between NHS Trusts. Nationally, the report showed there was no change in the caesarean rate from 2007/08 with the rate remaining at 24.6 %

(See:

[NHS Maternity Statistics, 2008-09: summary.](#)

**The Care Services Minister, Phil Hope has launched a NHS Stressline, a new NHS helpline which is designed to offer emotional and practical support to people who are worried about debt, housing and employment**

NHS Stressline, which is linked to the Government's Talking Therapies programme, ensures that callers will receive practical information and advice from trained health advisors. If they are suffering from stress, anxiety or depression, they will be directed to a wider package of financial and mental health support.

The Minister argues that the facts show:-:

- Debt can be a cause and a consequence of mental health problems, such as stress, anxiety and depression, but often people do not know where to seek help.
- Nearly half the UK population worried about money and debt in 2009.
- A quarter of people with mental health problems experience debt, but a third of people these people do not seek help for financial difficulties.
- Average household debt in the UK is £9,120 excluding mortgages.

(See:

[NHS stressline tackles new year money blues](#)

**Recently released statistics from the '[Cervical Screening Programme, England 2008-09](#)' indicates that:-**

- For the first time since 2002 the percentage of eligible women aged 25 to 64 who have been screened at least once in the previous 5 years (coverage) has increased. It is now

78.9 per cent compared with 78.6 per cent last year, 81.6 per cent in 2002 and 82.3 per cent in 1999.

- The increase in coverage is more prominent amongst the younger age groups. The proportion of 25 to 49 year olds (screened every 3 to 3.5 years) increased to 72.5 per cent compared with 69.3 per cent last year (a 3.2 percentage point increase). Within the older age range (50 to 64 – screened every five years) the proportion of women being screened has fallen slightly to 80.0 per cent compared with 80.3 per cent last year.
- The number of women screened (all ages) has increased to 3.7 million compared with 3.4 million last year, an increase of 10.5 per cent (around 353,000), those within the 25 to 64 age range have risen to 3.6 million from 3.2 million last year, an 11.9 per cent increase (around 384,000). The majority of this increase is for women aged 25 to 49.

(See:

[\*Cervical Screening Programme, England 2008-09\*](#)

[\*Big increase in numbers of women undergoing cervical screening\*](#)

**Following the publication of the final guidance for young people and alcohol '[\*Guidance on the consumption of alcohol by children and young people: a report by the Chief Medical Officer\*](#)', which gave young people and their families a clear five point alcohol advice guide, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) have published a research report '[\*Impact of alcohol consumption on young people: a systematic review of published reviews\*](#)' which indicates that parents worry more about their children having unwanted pregnancies, road traffic accidents and taking drugs than they do about their child drinking alcohol, and has prompted the Government to urge parents to talk to their children about the risks associated with drinking alcohol.**

(See:

[\*One in three parents do not talk to their children about the risks associated with drinking alcohol\*](#)

**The Shadow Health Secretary, Andrew Lansley has revealed that NHS organisations across the country have been paying hugely inflated hourly rates for agency staff to cover shifts, and has called this a 'hugely wasteful way to run the NHS'. 'It is unforgivable that more than £300 million of taxpayers' money intended for the NHS is instead going to employment agencies' he added.**

Examples of the inflated hourly rates include an agency nurse on £146 an hour, an agency doctor on £375 an hour, and an agency manager on £400 an hour.

(See:

[\*The cost of NHS agency staff pay\*](#)

[\*NHS agency staff spending 'soars' amid funding fears\*](#)

**See also:**

**Mr. Lansley has also accused the Government of 'incompetence' in the payments that the UK and Republic of Ireland make to each other to cover the cost of providing healthcare to each other's citizens, including pensioners and their dependants that has resulted in millions of pounds being diverted from the NHS budget.**

(See:

[\*Labour's incompetent health deal loses the NHS millions\*](#)

**The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) have published a report '[\*Disabled Children's Access to Childcare \(DCATCH\) pilot activity\*](#)' which aims to share**

**information and learning to date and to make early information about DCATCH pilot activity available to a wider audience.** The report summarises learning from DCATCH pilot areas for the information of local authorities and children's trusts as they prepare new childcare sufficiency assessments for 2011 and develop strategies to expand the range, quality, and affordability of childcare available to families with disabled children.

(See:

[Disabled Children's Access to Childcare \(DCATCH\) pilot activity](#)  
[£12.5 million extra help for childcare for disabled children](#)

**The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is urging employers across the South East to ensure their workers are kept safe in 2010 in order to improve on last year's safety record.** The HSE argue that last year over 300 work related incidents occurred across the South East each week, an annual total of 15,997 people being killed or injured, and hope this figure will act a stark reminder to employers and staff to make their workplaces safer this New Year and drive down casualty rates.

The 2008/09 statistics show 15 people were killed at work across the region while 3,767 sustained major injuries and 12,523 more suffered injuries requiring more than three days absence. The figures compare with 23 fatalities, 3,663 major injuries and 12,780 cases requiring more than three days absence in 2007/08. This equates to 4.9million working days lost at a massive cost to the economy and individual businesses, which is why HSE says it makes perfect sense to make working environments safe.

The organisation warns that if employers insist on compromising the health of their employees then it will not hesitate in taking enforcement action.

(See:

[South East employers asked to make New Year safety resolution](#)

**The Department of Health (DOH) report that new figures from the 'You're your Limits' campaign indicate that people drinking spirits at home are giving themselves more than double (128% extra) of the amount of alcohol which they would buy in a pub.**

The study which was conducted as a series of experiments across England found that the average 'home barman' pours themselves 57ml when they drink a spirit such as vodka, gin or whisky, which works out at 32ml more than a standard single 25ml measure. The study surmised that if on average English drinkers had eight spirits drinks over a week at home, they would be drinking nearly half a litre (456ml) of vodka, gin or whisky, compared to 200ml if they'd ordered the same number of single measures in a pub or bar, with the extra equating to 17 units over the week, instead of the recommended

These extra sips equate to 17 units instead of 7.5 units.

(See:

[English drinkers knock back double shots at home](#)

[Home drinkers 'over-pour spirits'](#)

[Average drinker unaware how many units they are drinking](#)

**Reporting on recent figures that illustrate how isolated older people can become, Care Services Minister Phil Hope is urging the public to make a New Year resolution to visit older neighbours more often.**

The Minister argues that many older people live alone and figures indicate that more than 180,000 say that they have gone for a whole week without speaking to friends, family or neighbours. He urges that social interaction can protect older people's mental health, helping to

do their shopping will prevent falls and injury and keeping an eye on their health will stop them developing serious health problems and ending up in hospital.

Figures show:

- over a million people over 65 feel trapped in their own homes.
- more than 180,000 have gone for a whole week without speaking to friends, neighbours or family.
- nearly half of all older people (about 4.6 million) consider the television as their main form of company.
- more than 50 per cent of over 75s live on their own.

(See:

[\*Make a New Year's resolution to look in on older neighbours\*](#)

**International Development Minister Mike Foster has announced that a pioneering new vaccine, 'Bivalent' OPV vaccine (bOPV) which provides more effective protection against the two remaining strains of polio, types 1 and 3, is being used for the first time in the world in Southern Afghanistan.** The new bOPV vaccine, which in trials has proved to be at least 30% more effective against both strains of polio, than the traditional oral poliovirus vaccine, has been developed over the last twelve months by the World Health Organisation, with the support of funding from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), and also has the advantage of delivering the benefits for both strains, in one package.

This will arguably, simplify and potentially accelerate vaccination and eradication efforts in war-ravaged countries like Afghanistan as well as in countries with weak health systems, such as in sub-Saharan Africa.

In addition, experts recently concluded that bOPV provides the most effective protection possible for young children against the two surviving strains (types 1 and 3) of the poliovirus. The roll-out of the bOPV is part of DFID's new £100 million drive to tackle polio over the next five years, and DFID has released £23 million as part of that funding package to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative to deliver:

- National immunisation days to reach every child under the age of five years, in countries with ongoing polio or at high risk of spread from polio infected countries.
- Supplemental 'mop-up' vaccination campaigns focussed on children in high risk areas with persistent poliovirus.
- Research into new vaccines and ways to ensure they are available to vulnerable children.
- Monitor activities to detect cases of polio so that progress can be measured and outbreaks contained.

(See:

[\*UKaid supports new vaccine to eradicate polio\*](#)

**At a conference on air quality to be held by LACORS (Local Authority Coordinators of Regulatory Services), Defra and the Department for Transport (DfT) council leaders will argue that unless greater powers are given to councils to help tackle pollution, then Britain will face up to £300million of fines from the EU in less than 18 months and up to 36,000 more people will die prematurely.** They will also call for new measures for local authorities to help cut emissions, improve air quality and reduce premature deaths from pollution, and greater powers to influence polluters in their areas, such as bus operators and the Highways Agency.

Stringent anti-pollution legislation was passed in Brussels in 1996 which most European governments failed to meet in 2005. The Government has applied for an extension until 2011 and if the UK does not meet those targets then the Government, and therefore taxpayers, will

face a bill of up to £300million. In addition, it is estimated that more than 24,000 people in the UK were killed by air pollution in 2005, and if this trend continues, then up to 36,000 more people could die unless air quality is improved.

(See:

[\*Air pollution must be tackled to stop EU fines and thousands of premature deaths\*](#)

**[A study on swine flu](#) conducted by Imperial College London researchers and a team from the US looked at how the virus spread among families, and surmised that in a study of more than 800 people, one in eight people developed the infection after someone in their house got it. But the team also dismissed suggestions that children may be 'super spreaders' as they were found to be no more contagious than older people, although the office figures indicate that rates of swine flu have tended to be higher among younger age groups.**

Dr Simon Cauchemez, lead researcher of the study argued that 'there is thought to be a large pool of children who have been infected but not displayed symptoms, and this research, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, confirmed that children were more likely to become infected.

**Age Concern have produced a report ['Undiagnosed, untreated, at risk'](#) which highlights depression amongst older people, and argues that the problem of depression in later life must become a priority for the NHS. The report is part of a campaign run by Age Concern who are proposing a three-point plan to improve the lives of older people with depression**

(See also:

[\*Loneliness: the silent epidemic sweeping through Britain\*](#)

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