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Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Bulletin No. 25 / 18 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.

Health in Kent

Consultation process on the future of KCC's Older Person's Service Provision

On Monday 14 June 2010, Kent County Council's Cabinet agreed for Kent Adult Social Services (KASS) to enter into a formal consultation process on the future of its Older Person's Service Provision.

From 21 June 2010, KASS Officers will be meeting with staff, service users, relatives, trade unions and other key stakeholders to provide information on the proposals for the future provision of older person's services and begin the official process.

The consultation period will run until 1 November 2010.

See:

[Future of care for older people](#)

[The future of older people's care](#)

Kent County Council Internet campaign 'Do I look like I care?'

Kent County Council has launched an Internet campaign 'Do I look like I care?' which marks the start of Carers Week, and aims to find those who care for people, but don't realise that they are carers, to get in touch and receive support.

See:

[Kent launches campaign to find and help carers](#)

Department of Health

Department of Health (DOH) statistical releases

The Department of Health (DOH) has released ['Communications summary: March 2010'](#)

The Department of Health (DOH) has published a statistical press notice ['Statistical press notice: NHS referral to treatment \(RTT\) times data, April 2010'](#) which is available on the DOH website.

The Department of Health (DOH) has published a statistical press notice ['Direct access audiology referral to treatment \(RTT\) waiting times data, April 2010'](#) which is available on the DOH website.

The Department of Health (DOH) has released a statistical press notice ['General practice patient survey 2009-10: final national results'](#) which are available on the DODH webpage

Department of Health (DOH) publication 'The Week'

The Department of Health (DOH) has published ['The Week'](#) which provides need-to-know news, consultations and events for chief executives and their teams.

Care Services Minister recognises carers' outstanding contribution to society

Care Services Minister Paul Burstow recognised the outstanding contribution of carers to society, when he visited a Lambeth GP practice to mark Carers Week.

The visit to Hetherington Group Practice was to highlight how better integration of health and social care services can improve and support the UK's six million carers.

See:

[Caring Contribution recognised in Carers Week](#)

Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme

The Department of Health (DOH) has released information regarding the ['Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme'](#), which is the mechanism used by the DOH to ensure that the NHS has access to good quality branded medicines at reasonable prices.

Government

The Vetting and Barring Scheme is halted

The Vetting and Barring Scheme, which made sure that all those who worked with children and vulnerable adults were registered, has been halted, pending a review on how to make the scheme more proportionate.

The scheme was introduced by the previous Government on the recommendations of the Bichard inquiry, and aimed to protect children and vulnerable adults by stopping those who posed a known risk from working with them. But the scheme also faced criticism as the procedure meant those who regularly volunteer or work with children would have to be registered on the new anti-paedophile database, and this was argued to be unnecessary for people like authors, and deter volunteers who help in schools and clubs.

See:

[Written Ministerial statement](#)

[Child worker vetting scheme halted](#)

[Government to review plans to introduce safeguarding scheme](#)

Report identifies necessities for children

The Department, Work and Pensions (DWP) report '[Family values – parents' views on necessities for families with children](#)' sets out the findings of a qualitative research project commissioned by the Child Poverty Unit (CPU) and designed to identify the views of parents about which items should be considered 'necessities' for families with children, and why.

The research was commissioned principally to inform the selection of a shortlist of items to go into the Office for National Statistics' 'Opinions' omnibus survey where members of the public identify necessities for families as part of the Government's combined measure of low income and material deprivation.

Parliament

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)

The House of Commons Library has published a Standard Note '[Disabled facilities grants \(DFG\)](#)' which provides an overview of the DFG system.

Mandatory DFGs are available from local authorities in England and Wales and the Housing Executive in Northern Ireland, subject to a means test, for essential adaptations to give disabled people better freedom of movement into and around their homes and to give access to essential facilities within the home.

House of Commons debates

The House of Commons debated [child poverty](#) and [pensioner poverty](#) on Monday 14 June 2010.

The House of Commons debated [violence against women](#) on Thursday 17 June 2010.

Ashford MP Damian Green participated in a Westminster Hall debate regarding [alternatives to child detention](#) on Thursday 17 June 2010.

House of Lords debates

There was a question in the House of Lords on Monday 14 June regarding how [cuts in Government spending would affect health agencies and arm's length bodies](#).

There was a House of Lords Written Statement regarding the [safeguarding of children](#) on Tuesday 15 June 2010.

There was a question in the House of Lords regarding [carers](#) on Wednesday 16 June

There was a debate in the House of Lords to call attention to the 40th anniversary of the [Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970](#) on Thursday 17 June 2010.

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Care Quality Commission

Care Quality Commission (CQC) new regulatory powers are implemented to ensure effective mental healthcare for older people in Devon

The Care Quality Commission has published the findings of a detailed investigation into the mental health services for older people supplied by Devon Partnership NHS Trust. The findings say that the trust has already made significant improvements to its services for older people, but history of inadequate supervision of staff had allowed poor practice to continue unchallenged until 2008.

See:

[Regulator calls on Devon Partnership NHS Trust to ensure mental health services for older people are up to standard](#)

Care Quality Commission (CQC) enforces action for regis

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) reports that action has been taken to ensure that The Causeway Retreat, on Osea Island in the Blackwater Estuary, Essex, has stopped providing people with treatment which counts as a registrable service, and for which it is not registered under the Care Standards Act 2000.

See:

[CQC takes action on The Causeway Retreat](#)

Other Health Information

Consultation on Evaluation Pathway Programme for Medical Technologies

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) is consulting on the proposed process and methods guides for the organisation's new [Evaluation Pathway Programme for Medical Technologies](#), and would like to receive comments on the documents from those interested, or those affected by the programme.

See also:

[NICE consults on process and methods guides for its Evaluation Pathway Programme for Medical Technologies](#)

The consultation will last for 12 weeks from 18 June to 10 September 2010.

US study indicates that a woman's healthy diet reduces the risk of cataracts

Research in the US indicates that reducing the levels of fatty food and salt in a diet significantly reduces the risk of cataracts, which in some cases can also lead to blindness.

The study, which was based on almost 2,000 women aged 50 – 79 examined their eating habits and awarded them a Healthy Eating index score based on the results. Women with the top 20% of healthy eating scores were found to have a 37% lower risk of developing cataracts than those in the bottom fifth of the table.

See:

[Healthy diet 'wards off cataracts'](#)

Study finds link between stress and the healing process

A study into stress and wound healing, argues that the British mantra of 'keep calm and carry on' could increase the healing process as those patients with lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol had wounds which healed twice as quickly as those patients who were stressed.

The results of the clinical study, which involved inflicting small 'punch' wounds on healthy volunteers and monitoring the healing process, was replicated when a similar pattern was found by researchers analysing the findings of 22 separate studies which looked at the link between stress and wound healing. Professor John Weinman at the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College argues that the findings could have implications for future treatment plans for patients recovering from surgical procedures.

See:

[Stress 'increases healing times'](#)

Study finds that the addition of apple juice to dementia patients' diet shows an improvement in behavioural symptoms

A study published in the *American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias* indicates that apple juice could help reduce behavioural and psychotic symptoms associated with dementia.

The study monitored the daily addition over a month of two 4oz glasses of apple juice to the diets of 21 people with moderate to severe dementia, and found that carers reported an approximately 27 % improvement in behavioural symptoms, such as agitation, anxiety and delusion. However, the study found that there were no notable changes in cognitive performance or day-to-day functions.

See:

[Study claims apple juice could help reduce agitation and anxiety in people with dementia](#)

Researchers indicate a link between rare genetic conditions and Autism

Researchers involved in the global Autism Genome Project, indicate that they have identified a number of rare genetic conditions linked to Autism, raising fresh hopes of developing a range of drugs and treatments for the condition, and diagnosing children at an earlier age.

See:

[Scientists closer to identifying the causes of autism](#)

Beatbullying research indicates a high proportion of suicides committed by young people are as a consequence of bullying

Beatbullying has released research which indicates that as many as 44% of suicides committed by young people in the UK are due to bullying. but more research into child suicide is absolutely critical.

Beatbullying reviewed data obtained from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), and correlated it with a systematic content analysis of national media reports. In consequence, the Beatbullying research team was able to analyse a third of child suicides, giving a substantial sample, and a real insight into the factors behind each death. But the organisation argue that more research into child suicide is absolutely critical.

See:

[Bullying \(Schools\): Westminster Hall debate](#)

[Bullying accounts for up to 44% of child suicides](#)

[Press release](#)

Doctors' role in closing the gap in health between the richest and poorest

A report by the Royal College of Physicians '[How doctors can close the gap: tackling the social determinants of health through culture change, advocacy and education](#)' argues that while all sectors in society have a role to play in reducing the gap in health between the richest and the poorest, doctors are in the key position to tackle the social determinants of health and reduce health inequality

Study designed to increase children and young people's ability to access help and use support when they experience abuse or neglect.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner has released '[Invitation to tender: children and young people's views of the child protection system and how these can contribute to an improved response to abuse and neglect](#)'.

The Children's Commissioner is committed to gaining the views and experiences of children and young people, and particularly those whose voices are least well heard, particularly children and young people who have experience of the child protection system

The overall objective of this project and the planned follow on study is to increase children and young people's ability to access help and use support when they experience abuse or neglect. The study will lead to proposals and potential policy calls addressing ways in which an understanding of children's perspectives can improve the child protection process and contribute to the increased recognition and disclosure of abuse and neglect.

Review of the operation and application of Health and Safety legislation

Prime Minister David Cameron has announced the appointment of Lord Young of Graffham as adviser on health and safety legislation and practice, and has also requested a cross party review to investigate concerns over the application and perception of health and safety legislation, together with the growth of compensation culture over the last decade.

See:

[PM announces review of health and safety laws](#)

[Health and safety 'used as an excuse', Judith Hackitt warns](#)

NICE study indicates cutting the drink-drive limit for motorists could prevent deaths

A study conducted by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) indicates that cutting the drink-drive limit for motorists in England and Wales by almost half could prevent around 3,000 road injuries and 145 deaths in the first year alone. Currently, the legal alcohol blood concentration limit for drivers is 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood, but NICE argue that reducing the limit to 50mg/100ml, in line with most countries in Europe, will result in major improvements to road safety.

When 15 countries in Europe introduced a limit of 50mg/100ml, it collectively led to 11.5 per cent fewer alcohol-related driving deaths among 18-25 year olds - the age group most at risk of being involved in accidents.

Over 400 people were killed in drink-driving accidents, accounting for 17 per cent of all road fatalities, according to UK figures from 2008.

See:

[Cutting drink-drive limit could save lives, NICE study finds](#)

[Lower Drink-Drive limit proposed'](#)

['Report calls for tougher drink driving laws'](#)

National Diabetes Audit

The sixth annual report of the National Diabetes Audit (NDA) presents the key national findings, including primary and secondary care participants in all age groups.

The Audit, which looks at the records of over 1.7 million people with diabetes in England and Wales, found that just over half of patients with type-2 diabetes and a third of patients with type-1 diabetes received all nine tests in 2008/9. This compares to only 10.6 and 11.9 per cent respectively, six years ago when the first national audit was conducted. However, the latest figures still remain below the recommended target levels set by NICE

See:

[National Diabetes Audit Executive Summary 2008-2009: executive summary](#)
[Diabetes care improves, but patients still missing out on key tests](#)

Protect care from budget cuts

Research for Age UK by the London School of Economics and the University of Kent reveals that if expected Government-wide spending cuts are applied to older people's social care services, a £1.75 billion funding black hole will open up within the next two years.

Age UK argue that if cuts on this scale are passed on to local authorities with social services responsibilities, councils would only be able to afford home care services for around 500,000 frail older people, compared to the one million who are projected to be eligible in 2012 under the criteria used by local authorities today.

See:

[Ring-fence social care like the NHS, campaigners urge](#)

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