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Sent: 05 February 2010 08:36
Subject: Health Overview and Scrutiny Community Bulletin No. 05 / 5 February 2010.

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Health Overview and Scrutiny Community Bulletin No. 05 / 5 February 2010.

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The Department of Health has published a consultation on issues concerning the current charging arrangements for residential social care.

There are four issues suggested by the Stakeholder Group on which the government wish to consult. They are further changes to the charging regulations regarding:

- The treatment of personal injury compensation
- The treatment of single premium investment bonds
- The introduction of the new disregard for pre-paid funeral plans
- Deferred self top-ups during the 12 week property disregard

It is not expected that these proposals will result in overall costs to local authorities, although the first two will increase the amount of money obtained from charging

Launch date: 29 January 2010

Closing date: 23 April 2010

See the consultation document: [Charging Arrangements for Residential Social Care](#)

The DCSF is consulting on draft regulations which would require local authorities to provide short breaks for those who care for disabled children and young people.

The department is also consulting on associated draft Statutory Guidance aimed at helping local authorities, and others, to understand the legal context of their duty to provide short breaks; issues related to eligibility for short breaks; the range of short breaks required; local assessment of sufficiency of provision; planning and information.

This e-consultation is available on the DCSF website.

Closing date for responses – Monday 26 April 2010.

The Department is also revising the Guidance on the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 in response to the “Care Matters” white paper.

[The consultation](#) responds to the commitments to transform outcomes for looked after children and care-leavers from the white paper.

Consultation runs until Friday, 19 March 2010.

Children to receive protection against 13 strains of pneumococcal bacteria

The Health Protection Agency (HPA) has reported that the Department of Health (DOH) has replaced the current pneumococcal vaccine (PCV) with a vaccine that protects against further strains of the disease.

The current PCV vaccine in use successfully protects against the seven major strains which cause pneumococcal infection, but the new vaccine will protect against the seven strains already contained in the current vaccine as well as six other common strains of the infection. Pneumococcal infection can cause diseases such as pneumonia, septicemia and meningitis.

See:

[Health Protection Agency welcomes addition of new pneumococcal vaccine to childhood immunisation programme](#)

Violent death amongst children has fallen by 40% in England and Wales in the last 35 years.

Bournemouth University has been carrying out research which has found that the death rate is the fourth lowest in the Western world amongst children of 14yrs or younger. The researchers have said that better monitoring by social workers and improved liaison between health visitors, paediatricians, GPs and police had led to the drop.

See:

[‘Child Killing rate drops by 40%’](#)

Quality is at the centre of recent NHS policy, but measuring quality improvement, and particularly in relation to patient safety, needs clarity.

The King’s Fund has published a report [‘Getting the measure of quality: opportunities and challenges’](#) which argues that measurement of quality to drive improvement is the consequence of a high-performing health care system, and the recent national focus on this area is likely to endure. But for this initiative to achieve its potential, all participants and stake-holders need to be aware of and able to respond to the opportunities and challenges that it presents.

See also:

[Getting the measure of quality: opportunities and challenges: summary](#)

The Sir Roger Bannister summit at Leeds Cast, November 2009.

A report published by the King’s Fund [‘Delivering better care at end of life: the next steps’](#) includes papers given at the Sir Roger Bannister summit and covers such issues as commissioning,

hospice and hospital care, quality markers, challenges for providers, together with an account of the debate generated.

See also:

[Delivering better care at end of life: summary](#)

TUC recession report: part one: statistics. Part 2: health impact of unemployment.

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) has published [‘Recession report no. 14. January 2010’](#).. Part one of the report details statistics and part two details the impact of unemployment on physical and mental health.

See also:

[Recession Report: press release](#)

The economic burden of dementia to the United Kingdom in 2008.

A report by the Health Economics Research Centre, University of Oxford for the Alzheimer’s Trust [‘Dementia 2010: the economic burden of dementia and associated research funding in the United Kingdom’](#) is the result of a study designed to estimate the economic burden associated with dementia to

the UK economy for the year 2008 in comparison with other major diseases, and then to compare the burden of these diseases with current levels of research funding.

See:

[Dementia 2010: Executive summary](#)

[Dementia 'losing out' to cancer in funding stakes](#)

Audit Commission assesses the local implementation of a decade of national policy on the health of children from birth to five years of age in England.

The Audit Commission report [‘Giving children a healthy start: a review of health improvements in children from birth to five years’](#) assesses the local implementation of a decade of national policy for the years regarding the health of children from birth to five years of age in England.

The report examines issues of finance, and also local service planning, delivery, and priorities including how local bodies can improve service delivery and access for vulnerable groups as well as offering recommendations for best practice.

See:

[Giving children a healthy start: summary](#)

Audit Commission report reviewing accident and emergency (A&E) data for Payment by Results (PbR) purposes in eight acute trusts.

The audit commission have published [‘PbR data assurance framework: findings from the accident and emergency pilot audits’](#) a report which reviewed accident and emergency (A&E) data for Payment by Results (PbR) purposes in eight acute trusts to ascertain if the PbR data assurance framework should be extended to cover A&E activity. The report indicates areas of excellent performance, but concedes most trusts need to improve.

The Audit Commission briefing regarding significant financial reporting issues highlighted during the Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) restatement exercise.

The Audit Commission have released a briefing [‘NHS IFRS briefing paper 7: Auditors’ review of restated comparatives for the 2009/10 accounts, February 2010’](#) which considers findings from auditors’ review of restated comparatives for the 2009/10 accounts by NHS bodies.

Free care at home will cost councils millions

According to new research the government’s controversial Personal Care at Home Bill will cost councils more than twice as much to implement.

[A survey](#) by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) estimates that councils will have to find £500m, but believes the true total cost of the offer could exceed £1bn a year.

Under the proposals, adults judged to be “critical” under the current Fair Access to Care Services criteria would be entitled to free care.

The Bill is due to come into effect in October this year, and will be further debated in Parliament next week.

See also:

[Free social care costs ‘significantly underestimated’](#)

The Department of Health has published guidelines on the clinical management of people refusing food in immigration removal centres and prisons

[The Guidelines](#) provide information for health professionals in prisons and immigration removal centres on:

- the physical effects of food refusal,
- the most effective practical and clinical management of individuals refusing to eat and drink,
- the legal aspects and the relevance of the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

It also addresses the considerable dangers and risks associated with re-feeding individuals who have been starving but who then decide to eat again.

The Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF), a voluntary incentive scheme for GP practices in the UK, rewards doctors based on the quality of care delivered to patients.

The think tank Bow Group have released a health policy paper, [‘The Quality and Outcomes Framework \(QOF\): what Quality and Which Outcomes?’](#) which evaluates the progress the QOF has made since its introduction and considers the different ways in which the QOF can be reformed.

The paper specifically looks at the role the QOF can play in tackling health inequalities, which is widely recognised as a persistent health challenge confronting the UK

The National Audit Office has published a report on the progress in improving the care of stroke victims.

[The National Stroke Strategy](#) is a comprehensive response to the concerns raised by the NAO in its 2005 report on stroke. The report from the NAO says that actions taken since 2006 have improved the value for money of stroke care; but improvements have not been universal and improvements in follow-up care have not matched those of acute care services. The NAO estimates that stroke patients' chances of dying within ten years have reduced from 71% to 67% per cent since 2006.

Read the full report: [Progress in improving stroke care](#)

Read the [Executive Summary](#)

Ministers aim to cut the number of smokers by half over the next ten years

The number of people smoking has fallen by a quarter in the past decade to 21%, and the proposed target is 10% by 2020.

[Measures](#) being considered include:

- removing branding from packets
- banning cigarette vending machines
- a commitment to try to stop young people taking up smoking
- a crack down on illegally imported cheap cigarettes.

Each year smoking causes 80,000 deaths and costs the NHS £2.7bn.

Chief Medical Officer Sir Liam Donaldson said the strategy would "discourage children from taking up smoking and prevent a great number of unnecessary and early deaths".

Smokers' lobby group Forest criticised the proposals for eroding people's ability to make lifestyle choices, and health charity Ash said that while it supported the plans in principle, there was a need for more detail and stronger pledges

See also:

[Smokers to face doorway ban in new public health policy](#)

[A smokefree future: a comprehensive tobacco control strategy for England](#)

Scientists have been able to communicate with a patient in a vegetative state in new UK research.

The findings, published in the [New England Journal of Medicine](#), used functional magnetic resonance imaging. A patient in Belgium was able to communicate "yes" and "no", these findings could raise ethical issues relating to treatment of similar patients. The Royal Hospital for Neurodisability in London has done a small study which found that 43% of patients who were admitted with a diagnosis of vegetative state could communicate.

Also see:

[‘Vegetative State Patients can respond to Questions’](#)

New figures indicate that the National Health Service budget for building and hospitals and buying medical equipment is set to fall sharply.

Channel Four News reports that a Department of Health (DOH) document indicates that capital spending on the NHS in England, including Private Finance Initiative (PFI) will fall from £6.7 billion to £5.3 billion. This represents a 21.9% reduction against the pre-Budget figure that indicated that capital spending would be £5.3 billion in 2009/10, falling to £4.3 billion in 2010/11.

The Prime Minister told MPs that the Treasury had already set out plans to reduce capital spending on the NHS in England, and argued that NHS spending on capital projects is falling, because now that many new hospitals have been completed, there is less need for large construction projects.

See:

[NHS building budget 'cut by 21 per cent'](#)

Essential Small Pharmacies

The Secretary of State has issued [‘The Local Pharmaceutical Services \(Essential Small Pharmacies\) \(Amendment\) Directions 2010’](#) as directions to Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) relating to Essential Small Pharmacies in England that operate under the Essential Small Pharmacies Local Pharmaceutical Services (ESP LPS) arrangements.

See:

[Essential Small Pharmacies Scheme \(ESPS\)](#)

Does the experience of staff working in the NHS link to the patient experience of care?

The Department of Health (DOH) has issued a report [‘Does the experience of staff working in the NHS link to the patient experience of care?: an analysis of links between the 2007 acute inpatient and NHS staff surveys’](#) which indicates that the research found a large number of associations between the NHS Staff and Acute trust in-patient surveys.

The report links the results of the 2007 acute inpatient & staff surveys using a series of statistical analyses intended to highlight the most important relationships between the two surveys, using an exploratory approach to discover which areas in the surveys are closely related, rather than simply looking for anticipated or intuitive associations.

See also:

[Introduction to the research report](#)

Independent experts’ reports on health and well-being.

A group of independent experts have published their reports on health and well-being, specifically focusing on the prevention of ill health.

- Richard Reeves’ report [‘A liberal dose?: health and wellbeing and the role of the state’](#) considered what the role of the state should be in relation to people’s health and well-being, specifically focussing on the prevention of ill-health
- The Geoff Mulgan report [‘Influencing public behaviour to improve health and well-being’](#) considered the lessons we can learn about influencing healthier lifestyle choices from fields such as behavioural economics, psychology and marketing
- The report by Dr Paul Cosford, Alwen Williams and Sir Howard Bernstein [‘Enabling effective delivery of health and well-being’](#) considered what the Department and the NHS can do to enhance delivery of front-line services to improve people’s health and well-being.

See also:

[Health and wellbeing reports](#)

NHS dentistry promises 'need more bite'

Lord Colwyn writes for ePolitix.com ahead of his oral question to ministers about [access to NHS dentistry](#).

Shingles vaccination programme moves a step closer

[Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation](#) (JCVI) has recommended that people aged between 70 and 79 should be offered the shingles vaccination, if the programme can be made cost effective.

The recommendation is covered by provisions in the NHS Constitution which mean that if the JCVI recommends a vaccine programme based on an assessment of cost-effectiveness, patients have the right to receive the vaccine on the NHS.

See also:

[Shingles vaccine hope for elderly](#)

The independent Advisory Group on Non-Ionising Radiation (AGNIR), has reviewed the latest scientific evidence on the health effects of ultrasound (frequencies above 20 kilohertz) and infrasound (below 20 Hz)

The Health Protection Agency (HPA) has published a report [‘Health Effects of Exposure to Ultrasound and Infrasound’](#) finds that the available evidence does not suggest that diagnostic ultrasound affects mortality of babies during pregnancy or soon after birth. The evidence also does not suggest any effect on childhood cancer risk. There have, however, been some unconfirmed reports suggesting possible effects on the developing nervous system - for instance, on handedness of the child.

See:

[Scientists issue comprehensive report into health effects of ultrasound](#)

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