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## Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Bulletin No. 41 / 9 October 2009

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Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) have launched a consultation '**ContactPoint: Consultation on Proposed Amendments to the Children Act 2004 Information Database (England) Regulations 2007**'. The consultation aims to seek views on proposed amendments to The Children Act 2004 Information Database (England) Regulations 2007 (the ContactPoint regulations) made under section 12 of the Children Act 2004 and enacted to apply in England only, on 1 August 2007. The ContactPoint regulations provide a legal framework for the operation and maintenance of ContactPoint (formerly known as the Information Sharing Index). The consultation document and other relevant documents are available on the [DCSF consultations](#) web page.

**Launch Date:** Friday 2 October 2009  
**Closing Date:** Tuesday 29 December 2009

**Following a consultation over the summer, the DCSF is now consulting on a draft Code of Practice on Provision of the free entitlement for 3 & 4yr olds which is to be increased from 12.5 to 15hrs.**

The [new consultation](#) consists of a package of documents including the draft code of practice and regulations together with an impact assessment. The new code would be implemented from September next year.

**Consultation closes on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2010.**

**The House of Commons Library have produced two Standard Notes on homelessness.** ['Homelessness: households in temporary accommodation \(England\)'](#) provides background to the increase in numbers in temporary accommodation and outlines various ongoing initiatives to reduce those numbers. ['Homelessness in England'](#) sets out the Government's policy on tackling statutory homelessness

**The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have produced ['2009 Addendum to the Race Equality Scheme 2005-2008'](#)** in which are set out some priority actions for the near future. The DCLG argue that the addendum to the 2005-2008 Race

Equality Scheme is designed to be used until Spring 2010 when a Single Equality Scheme will be produced

**Home Office Minister David Hanson has announced a new campaign to highlight [awareness of knife crime](#), including a campaign taskforce of young anti-knife campaigners together with new advertising which highlights the cost of carrying a knife. The campaign is part of the next phase of the Home Office's 'It Doesn't Have to Happen' campaign, which aims to reduce knife carrying among 10 to 16 year olds.**

The advertising employs the powerful message 'carry a knife and lose your life' demonstrating how easily carrying a knife can lead to death, loss of freedom or serious injury, and is based on research that indicates that messages make the most impact for the 10 – 16 year old age group when they come from their peers who have experience of the issue and can talk first hand about the consequences.

The youth taskforce is comprised of a group of young people, aged 15 to 20, from communities touched by knife crime who will be spreading the campaign messages to their peers.

The next phase of the campaign includes:

- two television and online adverts. The first of these is based on the testimonials of real inmates at a young offenders institute serving sentences for knife offences. This advert will run on youth websites and TV music channels – including Kiss, 4 Music and the Box
- posters which portray the punitive consequences of carrying a knife will be displayed at bus stops in key areas across England and Wales
- youth taskforce campaigners from cities across the UK including London, Leeds, Cardiff and Bristol who will spread campaign messages in their local communities and via the campaign Bebo site
- music video 'Don't Shank Just Skank' members of the taskforce and top house music artists including Donaeo and DJ Luck and MC Neat spreading anti-knife messages through music and dance. The video will be available on the Bebo site.

**The Department of Health (DOH) have announced the completion of a series of reforms proposed in the White Paper [Trust, Assurance and Safety](#) and designed to modernise the regulation of health professionals and ensure that safety and quality in the care of patients is paramount.**

Key to the reforms are:

- Each regulator has moved to a fully appointed council, with parity between lay and professional members, to ensure that professional interests do not dominate.
- The Appointments Commission against specific criteria relating to their skills and expertise will independently appoint new council members for the regulators.
- Smaller, more board-like councils will enhance the ability of the regulators to act strategically.

Health Minister Ann Keen said,

'Healthcare professionals work extremely hard to provide high standards of care that patients expect. Regulatory bodies play a vital role in maintaining these standards and ensuring that those few professionals who fall below them are dealt with fairly and firmly. The changes we have introduced will continue to raise professional standards in healthcare and encourage more transparency and high quality services for patients and the public.'

(See:

[Completion of reform to the healthcare regulatory bodies](#)

**The NHS Information Centre have published *'Provisional Monthly Hospital Episode Statistics for Admitted patient care and outpatient data, April 2008 - June 2009'***

Key facts from the year from July 08 to June 09 there were:

- 16.3 million finished consultant episodes (FCEs), 57.1 per cent of which included at least one procedure or intervention, and of these 5.2 million were day cases.
- 14.1 million admission episodes, of which 5.0 million were emergency admissions.

In the year from July 08 to June 09 there were:

- 75.9 million outpatient appointments were made, with 61.4 million (80.9 per cent) of these attended by the patient.
- 6.0 million outpatient appointments were not attended by the patient, representing 8.0 per cent of all appointments.

(See:

[Hospital activity \(Hospital Episode Statistics - HES\)](#)

[Provisional Monthly Hospital Episode Statistics for Admitted patient care and outpatient data, April 2008 - June 2009: summary](#)

**The Prime Minister's Commission on the Future of Nursing and Midwifery has set out a vision that will allow nurses and midwives to transform the quality of care.**

The ultimate goal of the vision is that all nursing and midwifery staff fulfil their potential to help people who use NHS services, families and communities achieve the best possible health and well being. In addition the vision emphasises that future nurses and midwives will take centre stage in all aspects of health care and that nursing and midwifery practice will be rooted in compassion.

Separate to the vision statement the Commission has also identified ten hot topics for further debate, and within these discussion pieces are the need to address the confusion over roles and title of nurses and midwives and the role of nurses and midwives in putting service users in charge of their own care.

Health Minister and Commission Chair Ann Keen said:

"In our vision nurses and midwives are ordinary people who do extraordinary things – there is so much untapped potential waiting to be unleashed. The Prime Minister has said he wants to see nurses and midwives in control and at the heart of the team leading on quality and safety.

(See:

[Summary vision](#)

[Hot topics](#)

[Nurses and Midwives will take centre stage in delivering tomorrow's healthcare](#)

**The Quality Care Commission (CQC) argue that preliminary indications of the enquiry into out of hours provider care 'Take Care Now' may also indicate a nationwide gap in monitoring.** Updating on the review of out of hours care provided by 'Take Care Now', the CQC argue that the NHS must improve monitoring on the premise that Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) may not be effectively monitoring performance of GP out-of-hours services, and risk failing to spot patient safety concerns as a result.

In addition, following visits to the five PCTs that commission out-of-hours services from Take Care Now, CQC found that although trusts monitor response times of the service, they do not consistently and routinely look in detail at the quality of care, and argue that this could mean opportunities to spot potential problems and indications of poor care are missed.

The variations in monitoring across the five trusts, have led the CQC to believe that this might be a widespread problem, and the organisation is concerned PCTs across the country may not be monitoring GP out-of-hours services closely enough, and must look at

criteria regarding the quality of clinical decisions, the efficiency of call handling, the adequacy of staffing and doctors' training in order to rigorously monitor performance (See:

[NHS may fail to spot patient safety concerns unless it improves monitoring of out-of-hours GP services, says CQC](#)

[Learning the lessons: making out-of-hours care safer](#)

[Better monitoring of out-of-hours GP services](#)

[Out of hours \(OOH\) primary care services: PCTs' contract and performance management arrangements](#)

**The Department of Health (DOH) have published guidance ['Supporting Learning Disability Partnership Boards to implement the National Carers Strategy'](#) which offers guidance to Learning Disability Partnership Boards to help them ensure carers of people with learning disabilities, and carers with learning disabilities are supported in their own right, and involved in local service developments which affect their lives, and the lives of the people they care for.**

The booklet covers:

- key facts about family carers of people with learning disabilities.
- what the National Carers Strategy is, and how it relates to the work of Learning Disability Partnership Boards.
- the responsibilities of Partnership Boards to ensure the National Carers Strategy's aims are fulfilled for carers of people with learning disabilities, and carers with a learning disability.
- important questions for Partnership Boards to ask in reviewing, devising and implementing services for people with learning disabilities and their carers, to ensure that the needs of carers are taken into account.
- links to resources to support Partnership Boards' ongoing work with carers.

**The Department for Health (DOH) have published ['Guidance for the pharmacological management of substance misuse among young people'](#) which aims to offer the first formal guidance to help clinicians to manage substance dependence among young people.**

Currently, the situation of no supporting guidance has left practitioners concerned that their practice may not accord with the developing evidence base. This guidance document fills that gap by describing good practice on the best ways to manage a clinically complex condition.

**Also:**

**The Department for Health (DOH) have published ['Guidance for the pharmacological management of substance misuse among young people in secure environments'](#) which aims to offer the first formal guidance to help clinicians to manage substance dependence among young people within a secure environment.** Currently, the situation of no supporting guidance has left practitioners concerned that their practice may not accord with the developing evidence base. This guidance document fills that gap by describing good practice on the best ways to manage a clinically complex condition

**The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have launched a major new fire safety campaign *'Fire Kills'* which emphasises that drowning in the toxic smoke of a house fire is the risk you take if you do not have a working smoke alarm.**

The campaign, based on advertisements, argues that two to three breaths of toxic smoke will affect your ability to breathe, and create a sensation similar to drowning, and

unconsciousness. The aim of the campaign is to encourage a long term behavioural change in the public so that weekly testing of their smoke alarms becomes a habit. New survey results from the Fire Kills campaign<sup>1</sup> show that people vastly underestimate the impact of toxic smoke. Of those surveyed:

- almost half (43 per cent) believe they could survive for more than two minutes in a smoke filled room.
- nearly half (48 per cent) think they would be alerted to a fire by the smell of the smoke.
- almost a fifth (18 per cent) believe a pet (eg their dog barking), or someone else would alert them to a house fire.

(See:

[Don't risk drowning in toxic smoke](#)

### **The Department for Work and Pensions has announced a major expansion of employment support and welfare reform.**

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Yvette Cooper, has announced the start of the next phase of the government's welfare reform. The [Flexible New Deal](#) will involve private, public and third party sector partners, and the first new starters under the £1bn Future Jobs Fund, alongside a major expansion of the successful Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs).

From next year, in certain trial areas, those who have been out of work for more than six months, and have refused to work experience, support or training, must attend a work trial or work experience placement as a condition of continuing to receive benefit.

### **Social services leaders have warned that Conservative proposals for meeting the costs of residential care for older people risks creating an incentive to discourage them from continuing to live in their own homes.**

[The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services \(Adass\) says](#) the proposals, unveiled ahead of the party's conference, went against evidence that older people would always prefer to stay in their own homes for as long as possible. Adass says the proposals might lead to their being encouraged to enter residential care prematurely.

### **Elderly people living in care homes are being put at risk because of sub-standard systems for handing out medicine, according to a report.**

University of London researchers found [seven in 10 residents were victims of drug errors](#), having carried out half-day snapshot inspections of 55 homes. They blamed inadequate information, over-worked staff, poor teamwork and often complex courses of medication. The government said a review was focusing on medication "weaknesses".

The report found that the majority of teams working in Britain's 20,000 care homes do not employ nurses, or other clinically trained staff. They instead rely on pharmacists and GPs signing repeat prescriptions.

### **The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has published a report looking at eight research and community development projects in Bradford.**

The study suggests the idea of a 'narrative in common' – developed by local people and connecting them across different neighbourhoods and backgrounds – as a more natural and progressive idea of 'cohesion' than that promoted through current national policy. It summarises findings from the eight projects about:

- Muslim women;

- Pakistani Muslim young men;
- recent migrants to Bradford;
- life on 'traditionally white' estates; and
- the use of creative media for community development and communication.
- Lessons for policy-makers from

(See:

[Evidence from research and development work in Bradford](#)

(See also:

[Women working towards excellence: Our Lives](#)

**[The Care Quality Commission](#) (CQC) is encouraging NHS employees to provide feedback on their experiences at work by participating in the seventh annual NHS Staff Survey.**

More than 300,000 staff in 392 trusts will be asked to participate, and the information gathered will be used to inform local and national changes in working conditions and ultimately improve the quality of care for patients.

The 2009 questionnaire is largely similar to that used in previous years and will allow Trusts to track progress over time, with additional questions on staff engagement and health and well being. CQC will report on the findings of the survey, including national trends, early next year.

**The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) report that the Children's Secretary, Ed Balls has written to the Chairman of DCSF Select Committee to invite him to hold a pre-appointment hearing with Maggie Atkinson,** who has been nominated, following a competitive and rigorous selection process validated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, to be the next Children's Commissioner when Sir Al Aynsley-Green comes to the end of his five year appointment on 28 February 2010.

(See:

[Preferred candidate for post of Children's Commissioner announced](#)

**The House of Commons Library has published a Standard Note ['Pension age'](#) as an overview of the current policy and legislation surround the State Pension Age.**

**The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) have welcomed the announcement that a Conservative Government would lead by example in the [sustainable procurement of food](#) arguing that this would help to achieve the Campaign's *'Vision for the Countryside 2026'* which calls for greater local consumption of local foods, particularly in public places like hospitals, schools and care home.** In addition, such proposals would raise the bar for Government's food procurement so that it meets British Standards, and strengthens support for British food produced to higher environmental standards.

Graeme Willis, Senior Campaigner at CPRE, said:

'These proposals should help push food higher up the electoral agenda - where it belongs. The freshness, quality and origin of the food we buy and eat are critical to the health and real wealth of our countryside'

**The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) have welcomed [Conservative Party proposals to reduce road deaths](#).** The proposals, announced by Theresa Villiers include more traffic police and education to reduce road deaths, but the CPRE also argue that, as

part of their 'Vision for 2016' more action is needed to make people feel safe enough to enjoy walking and cycling, particularly on rural roads.

Ralph Smyth, CPRE's Senior Transport Campaigner said:

'Many motorists want to drive at a safe speed without being tailgated, to feel safe walking their dogs along a lane or letting their kids cycle to school, but without measuring how safe people feel using local roads, local communities won't be able to compare how well their local council and police are doing their job.'

**The Department for Health (DOH) have released monthly statistics [August diagnostic return - commissioner based - national summary](#)' which gives the waiting times for 15 key diagnostic tests carried out in the NHS for the month ending 31<sup>st</sup> August 2009.**

Main findings this month are:

- The number of patients, for whom English commissioners are responsible, waiting over 6 weeks for one of the 15 key diagnostics tests at the end of August 2009 was 4,000, a decrease of 400 (8.2%) from July 2009, and a fall of 6,500 (61.8%) from August 2008.
- The number of patients, for whom English commissioners are responsible, waiting over 13 weeks for one of the 15 key diagnostics tests at the end of August 2009 was 164, compared to 344 in July 2009, and a fall of 3,177 (95.1%) from August 2008.

These diagnostics can be found on the [Diagnostics page](#) of the DOH website.

(See also:

[Diagnostics waiting times & activity data, month ending 31 August 2009](#)

**The Department for Health (DOH) have published '[CMO update 49](#)', a bi-annual newsletter sent from the Chief Medical Officer to all doctors in England, which incorporates topics that might otherwise have required an individual letter, progress reports on earlier letters, and other information from the Department of Health.**

(See:

[CMO Update 49](#)

**The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have published '[An Overview of Cross-sectional Change Data 2002-08](#)' which presents new data from the 2008 New Deal for Communities household survey and includes key indicators focusing on change in relation to health, community, housing and the physical environment.**

**The Department of Health (DOH) have published a 'dear colleague' letter '[18 Weeks - Next steps](#)' which outlines the steps necessary to the success of the 18 weeks pledge**

**Local Government figures are concerned that the Labour Party's proposed National Care Service will commit them to unquantifiable financial burdens.**

The figures for budgetary savings which will need to be made are only the bottom line as the total number of people who will meet the criteria for free care is currently unknown. There are also uncertainties about whether the current commissioning system would work under the reforms.

Meanwhile the Conservatives have proposed a Home Protection Scheme which would cover a person's residential care for life at the cost of £8,000. This would be a voluntary fee paid at the age of 65.

(See:

[Cost of Free Social Care Unquantifiable](#)  
[Tories propose Full Care for One-Off Fee](#)

**The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has issued a Viewpoint document evaluating the government's Shaping the Future of Care green paper.**

**["Identifying a Fairer System for Funding Adult Social Care"](#) says that more detailed information on funding needs to come out and the government needs to show to what extent arrangements will be fairer than they are at present.**

**Health Minister Phil Hope has announced that twenty sites across England, including Eastern and Coastal Kent and Medway, have been selected to participate in a detailed evaluation study to identify the benefits of [Personal Budgets for health](#) and the patient groups who will benefit most from them,**

The Government introduced a pilot scheme for personal health budgets in seventy sites earlier this year, and at the time pledged their commitment to creating a more personalised and responsive NHS through the budgets, which aim to give patients the freedom to choose the support services they want for themselves or a family member.

Phil Hope said:

'Personal health budgets are an innovative new policy, this study will help us to understand the benefits and limitations of Personal Health Budgets and ensure that they provide the maximum possible benefits to as many patients as possible.

(See also:

[New study to examine benefits of Personal Health Budgets](#)

**The NHS have published the first annual report of the Organ Donation Taskforce Implementation Programme report of ['Working together to save lives: the Organ Donation Taskforce Implementation Programme's annual report, 2008/09'](#). The report highlights the progress that has been made in the first year of the Implementation Programme, and particularly focuses on the changes in structures and arrangements in the NHS around the move to a centrally managed, and enlarged, network of Donor Transplant Coordinators and the appointment of Clinical Leads for Organ Donation within hospital trusts.**

(See also:

[Working together to save lives: the Organ Donation Taskforce Implementation Programme's annual report, 2008/09](#)

[Organ donation and transplantation](#)

[Hundreds more transplants, but more organ donors still needed](#)

**Cancer charities have joined Gordon Brown to highlight the lifesaving importance of the [NHS breast cancer screening](#) which currently diagnoses over 14,000 cases of breast cancer each year and saves around 1,400 lives annually. The Prime Minister and the charities are calling for all women to make the important decision to be screened, as figures show that if all women took up their right to screening, an extra 600 lives could be saved annually, and in 2008 27% of women failed to take up their right to screening.**

(See:

[Charities join Prime Minister to send united message on breast cancer](#)

**People should consider sending cards and gifts to friends and family suffering with mental health problems, experts say.**

The Royal College of Psychiatrists said cards and gifts were a simple way to [support people with mental illness](#). The college even said it may aid their recovery. It made the plea after carrying out a poll of 131 mental health patients, which showed over half did not receive any gifts or cards when they were ill. This compared to just a third who did not get presents the last time they were physically ill.

**This year's annual seasonal flu vaccination campaign was launched today by the Department of Health. The campaign will encourage people in Kent who are at risk of seasonal flu to protect themselves by getting their free flu jabs.**

Everyone aged 65 and over is routinely offered the jab, as are younger people with long-term conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, serious kidney and liver disease. [Around 15 million people](#) in the UK have the jab, which must be administered every year as it is altered annually to match the seasonal flu strains in circulation.

### **Forthcoming Parliamentary Business**

**The House of Commons and House of Lords are in recess until Monday 12 October 2009.**

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