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Tel: (01622) 694125,
Freecall: 7000 4125
E-mail: TheInformationPoint@kent.gov.uk
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Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Bulletin No. 46 / 13 November 2009

If you would like to receive further information, please telephone or email the appropriate contact officer responsible. Alternatively, contact Paul Wickenden on 01622 694486 or email tristan.godfrey@kent.gov.uk.

The Dept for Children, Schools and Families has published a consultation, [The Registration of Births \(Parents Not Married And Not Acting Together\) Regulations 2010](#), on new rules aimed at ensuring that wherever possible births are registered by both parents.

Current arrangements mean unmarried mothers can choose whether or not to register the name of a baby's father on their birth certificate resulting in 7% of births – on average 45,000 a year – being registered with only one parent. The new regulations, made under the Welfare Reform Bill, will mean that in most cases, both unmarried parents will be required to register their names on their child's birth certificate.

(See:-

[Accompanying Consultation Documents](#) and [Press release](#)

Launch date - Tuesday 10 November 2009

Closing date - Tuesday 2 February 2010

The Dept for Children, Schools and Families has published a consultation on the [Pupil and School Information Regulations](#).

The Children's Plan Progress Report commits the Government to reviewing the secondary legislation which governs the information that schools record and provide on pupils (in educational and curricular records and school reports); and on themselves (in prospectuses).

This consultation sets out proposed amendments to this legislation, which are intended to help parents to have better access to information about their children's learning and development, at the right time. When implemented, the revised regulations will be accompanied by guidance for schools and local authorities - views on the content of the guidance are also welcomed.

(See:-

[Accompanying Consultation Documents](#)

Launch date - Monday 9 November 2009

Closing date - Monday 1 February 2010

Defra has launched a consultation on the transposition of Directive 2008/50/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 May 2008 [on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe](#).

This consultation is seeking views on our proposed approach for transposing into English legislation the provisions of the Council Directive on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe (2008/50/EC). The Directive came into force on 11 June 2008 and must be transposed by member states into national legislation by 10 June 2010.

(See:-

[Accompanying Consultation Documents](#)

Launch date – Monday 9 November 2009

Closing date - 29 January 2010

The NHS has published a consultation [NHS Constitution: a consultation on new patient rights](#) regarding waiting times and access to NHS health checks for patients. The proposals, set out in 'The NHS Constitution: A consultation on new patient rights', mean that from 1 April 2010, patients will have the legal right to a maximum waiting time to start treatment within 18 weeks of GP referral, and to be seen by a cancer specialist within 2 weeks of GP referral.

(See also:- [NHS Press Release](#)

Launch date – Tuesday 10 November 2009

Closing date - 5 February 2010

The Ministry of Justice has launched a consultation [Civil Monetary Penalties - setting the maximum penalty](#).

The consultation proposes to introduce a maximum civil monetary penalty for serious breaches of the Data Protection Act. This reflects the importance that the government places on safeguarding personal data effectively and processing it responsibly and lawfully.

(See:

[Accompanying Consultation Documents](#)

Launch date – 9 November 2009

Closing date - 21 December 2009

In the Westminster Hall debate on [health inequalities](#), the Government faced criticism from all sides over the policies in place to tackle health inequalities.

The Health select committee's report on the issue argued that 'insufficient thought and a lack of clear objectives' had made meaningful evaluation of the government's policy initiatives 'practically impossible'.

(See:

[Health Inequalities: debate](#)

The number of 999 calls about symptoms of a possible stroke has increased by 70% in England since the launch of an awareness campaign in February.

[The Department of Health campaign](#) promoted a simple test to recognise the signs of a stroke and act quickly. Posters and leaflets promoting the test under the slogan Act FAST were placed in GP surgeries, village halls and libraries, while adverts ran in newspapers and on TV and radio

Stroke accounts for 9% of deaths in men and 13% of deaths in women in the UK. But swift emergency action can limit damage in the brain and dramatically increase a person's chances of surviving.

(See also:

[Stroke Calls up by over half following ACT F.A.S.T. Campaign](#)

Hospital patients in England may get the right to be seen privately if the NHS cannot treat them quickly enough.

Hospitals [have to start treating patients within 18 weeks of referral](#) - or two weeks in the case of cancer. But ministers now want to give patients a legal right to private care - or treatment at another NHS centre if so desired - if this does not happen. The Tories, who would scrap waiting time targets, said it was an "unaffordable and uncostered" pledge. Some patients - in fact several thousand a month - are already being treated at private hospitals under the NHS through the patient choice initiative.

The Public Accounts Committee has published a report examining progress in reducing healthcare associated infections in hospitals.

Every year over 300,000 patients in England acquire a healthcare associated infection whilst in hospital. These infections cost the NHS more than £1 billion a year. Read the report: [Reducing healthcare associated infection in hospitals in England](#)

Following recommendations from the Nursing and Midwifery Council it has been announced that, from 2013, all nurses will have to undergo a three year degree-level training.

Many nursing roles now involve increasingly advanced levels of clinical knowledge and practice, and the extra time spent in training will also involve students shadowing district nurses and community health teams. Concern has been raised about the need to retain the caring side of nursing as well as raising the academic level.

(See:

[Nursing to become Graduate Entry](#)

The Audit Commission has published an analytical ['More for less: are productivity and efficiency improving in the NHS?'](#) which looks at how NHS money has been spent, whether primary care trusts have been successful in keeping more patients out of hospital, and whether hospitals have become more efficient.

The report argues that the NHS is treating more patients at lower cost and trusts are starting to meet the challenges of the future. In addition, trusts are increasing productivity and reducing unit costs. But overall, the report argues that there is no sign yet that primary care trusts have been successful in moving care from hospitals closer to patients' homes.

(See also:

[Are productivity and efficiency improving in the NHS?](#)

[NHS Confederation responds to findings of the Audit Commission 'More for Less' report](#)

The think tank the Bow Group have published a paper ['People Power: Reforming QUANGOs' – Is this Applicable to Health Agencies?'](#).

The paper is designed to apply Mr. Cameron's criteria of assessment to the key health agencies and bodies in the UK in order to glean a better understanding as to which health QUANGOs (defined as agencies, committees, advisory boards and other organisations) should be scrapped, reformed or merged

The [Foundation's New Earswick community Philosophy Project](#), funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), was designed to promote intergenerational understanding and create an opportunity to undertake innovative work, put theory into practice and experiment with ideas.

The three-year experiment used an approach called 'Community Philosophy' to promote conversations and develop positive relationships between different groups of people within a community. This report:

- draws on the examination and analysis that was part of the project's day-to-day activity.
- captures the reflections of the project director and participants in the project.
- describes the theory behind the project, along with its activities (in the form of a series of practice-based examples).
- derives lessons of use to people who work in the community, especially youth and community workers, and those with responsibility for community involvement and organisational governance.

(See:

[*Community philosophy: A project report*](#)

The [Health Act 2009](#) has received Royal Assent and enables a number of provisions, including placing a legal duty on the NHS to have a regard for the NHS Constitution, safeguard the principles and values of the NHS for the future and sets out the rights and responsibilities of patients and staff. In addition, the Act will also enable the piloting of direct payments for healthcare, giving patients more choice and greater control over the care they receive, and improving the quality of health services.

The Act also enables legislation to help to protect children and young people from the harms of tobacco with provisions that mean shops will no longer be allowed to display tobacco products and there will be a prohibition on the sale of tobacco from vending machines.

Key measures in the Health Act 2009 will:

- Strengthen tobacco control to protect children and young people from the harm caused by smoking.
- Place a duty on all NHS bodies, private sector and third sector providers of NHS services to have regard to the NHS Constitution.
- Pilot direct payments to give patients greater choice and control over their health care.
- Introduce new powers to de-authorise Foundation Trusts in certain, exceptional, circumstances.
- Create new quality accounts that will help improve the quality of health services.
- Introduce innovation prizes to encourage an enterprise and innovation culture within the NHS.
- Increase powers of suspension to strengthen our ability to hold to account those who fail to meet the requirements of public office.
- Establish a regime for unsustainable NHS providers to protect patients and staff from failing services.
- Reform pharmacy services to ensure that pharmacies are providing high quality services based on local needs.

The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act today received Royal Assent, bringing in a host of new measures to prepare for the country's long-

term economic and social needs and build on the huge rise in school standards over the last decade.

The Act provides the first complete legislative overhaul of Apprenticeships legislation for nearly 200 years, and places the new Apprenticeship Offer for suitably qualified young people on a statutory basis from 2013 and ensuring a good quality apprenticeship for apprentices and employers alike.

Key points from the Bill are:

- a statutory framework for apprenticeships which creates a right to an apprenticeship for suitably qualified 16-18 year olds.
- introduces a right for employees to request time away from their duties to undertake training, and places a corresponding duty on employers to consider such requests seriously and to be able to refuse them only for specified business reasons
- transfers the responsibility for funding education and training for 16-18 year olds to local authorities.
- creates the Young Person's Learning Agency, the Skills Funding Agency, a new regulatory body for qualifications (Ofqual), and a new agency to carry out the non-regulatory functions currently performed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

(See:

[Apprenticeships Debate](#)

[Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill](#)

Councils are cutting the opening hours of libraries, care homes and provincial police stations in an effort to save money, a poll by public sector union Unison has claimed.

[The union says](#) job losses a result of the measures, which also include curtailing the early retirement pensions of injured police officers, are set to treble in the next three months - from 1,700 to more than 7,000. Areas hit include hospitals, schools, universities, tourist information centres, parks, pest control services, leisure centres and public toilets.

Councils could be caught up in a row between the Government and environmental groups over plans to fast-track major planning projects with high carbon impacts.

The Government have published six draft [national policy statements](#) (NPSs) to help push through the building of major infrastructure projects – such as power stations. Environmental campaigners, Friends of the Earth, say the NPSs must clearly set out the impact of developments on UK carbon emissions including an explanation of how they will deliver on the nation's carbon budgets.

The group warned that a legal challenge could follow should the Government not consider climate change.

(See also:

[Ed Miliband to unveil plans to fast-track new nuclear power stations](#)

[Nuclear power is safe, says Ed Miliband](#)

Local Government Finance Directors have said that the lower than expected pay award is helping to fill some of the budget gaps, but there are still big holes in Adult social care and Children's services budgets.

Unitary and Top Tier Councils have saved, on average, over £1m on their staff salary bills this year, but District councils have been struggling with lower income from fees

and charges and the lower interest rates, and local government may be looking at a pay freeze next year.

(See:

[Underspend plugs Budget Gaps](#)
[Row over Funds budgeted for Pay](#)

Gordon Brown has spoken to the LGC, endorsing the work of family intervention and crime and disorder partnerships across the country saying that the work these do is critical and much can be learned from them.

He also said that work should be done to reduce public and fear and to provide more support and information to anyone who is affected by anti-social behaviour.

(See:

[Use Local Powers, says Gordon Brown](#)

Faster and better contact between children's services professionals across England will now become a reality as ContactPoint starts to be rolled out nationally to local authorities and frontline practitioners

ContactPoint is an online directory holding basic contact information for all children and their parents, as well as contact details for any professional working with that particular child. It was developed in response to a key recommendation of the Laming Inquiry into the tragic death of Victoria Climbié, and has been designed to help frontline practitioners work across organisations.

The early adopter phase started in January 2009 in 18 local authorities in the North West, with it rolling out to a limited number of practitioners in those areas from May 2009. Two national voluntary sector partners – Barnardo's and Kids – also took part in the pilot. The Government expects the rollout of ContactPoint to practitioners, including doctors, nurses, social workers, and police, to continue over the next two years.

An evaluation report of the initial phase of the ContactPoint rollout, Lessons Learned from the Early Adopter Phase, shows how ContactPoint is making a positive difference daily to the practitioners already using it.

(See:

[Information about ContactPoint and the evaluation report: 'ContactPoint, Lessons Learned from the Early Adopter Phase'](#)

Responding to an independent review commissioned by the Department of Health (DOH), Care Services Minister Phil Hope has announced a tough new action plan to tackle the [over prescribing of antipsychotic drugs to people with dementia](#). The review indicated that too many people with dementia are routinely prescribed antipsychotic drugs to treat aggression and agitation, contrary to National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance. Where antipsychotics prescription is necessary in certain circumstances, the medication is to be administered in line with NICE guidance, and where all other methods have been tried. This should be for a short period of three months only, whilst a care plan is put in place

The action plan will also include:-

- a new National Clinical Director for Dementia.
- measures to ensure people with dementia and their carers have access to psychological therapies to tackle the root of agitation and aggression.
- an audit to establish definitive prescribing figures.
- clear local targets to cut antipsychotics use as a result of the audit; and better regulation.

- collaboration with the General Medical Council (GMC) and Royal Colleges to ensure all health and social care staff have specialist training in dementia.
- joint Department and Alzheimer's Society guidance on what to do if a family member is given antipsychotics.

(See:

[Anti-Psychotic Drugs \(Dementia\): written Ministerial statement](#)

Tens of thousands of training places could be axed under plans to claw back £340m from England's further education and skills budget.

[The BBC reports](#) a leaked government document suggests a proposal to axe at least 133,000 training places - some for the most deprived areas in the country. Adult apprenticeship budgets and further education college places are also being earmarked for savings. The government said it was consulting on how best to make efficiency savings.

A review of how much students in England pay for university has been launched by ministers, to be chaired by former BP chief, Lord Browne.

The review has been told it must take into account the [aim of widening participation in university](#) and the need to simplify support for students. The findings of the review will not be published before the general election. Business Secretary Lord Mandelson promised to consult "all who would be affected by any changes."

The UCU lecturers' union said that political parties must still declare their positions on how much students should pay and how loans should be funded. "Failure to do so will deny the general public a voice on the debate on the future of university funding," said general secretary, Sally Hunt.

Many front-line [children's social workers](#) have abandoned the profession in the wake of the Baby Peter case.

An LGC survey reports a 20% increase in the number of councils reporting difficulties in recruiting and retaining child-protection social workers.

The situation has worsened despite a third of councils (34%) experiencing recruitment and retention problems boosting salaries for children's social workers by offering market supplements.

(See also:

[Social worker retention crisis deepens](#)

Also:

An LGA survey has found that the number of social workers leaving council care departments is rising far more quickly than it was previously thought.

Some councils have tried boosting salaries of children's social workers, and offering other recruitment and retention incentives, but the public vilification of children's social workers since the Baby Peter case has been having an effect.

(See:

[Social Worker retention Crisis Deepens](#)

A new survey of 100 UK schools has shown that 70% of [pupils who suffer a bereavement](#) under perform at school compared with their previous performance.

The survey showed that 80% of the school surveyed did not have a written school bereavement support policy while just over a third did not have a named member of staff acting as a bereavement support officer.

Gordon Brown's [plans to cut childcare vouchers](#) for more than 340,000 parents have been criticized by a number of former Labour MPs as unfair.

The Prime Minister plans to remove the vouchers, which are thought to save parents up to £2,400 a year on the cost of nurseries, nannies or childminders and replace this scheme with money to provide 10 hours of free childcare for 250,000 two-year-olds by 2015.

MPs are concerned that the plans will impact Labour support in marginal seats in the run up to next year's general election.

A new study by the think tank, Demos, has shown that children whose parents take [a "tough love" approach](#) are better prepared to achieve in life.

The research tracked the lives of 9,000 families over eight years and showed that the tough love style of parenting combines warmth and discipline, and is far more important in a child's success than parents' income or social background.

Children's Minister, Dawn Primarolo, has called for local authorities to continue to bring down teenage pregnancies in the [Government's response](#) to the Teenage Pregnancy Independent Advisory Group annual report.

The Minister said that teenage births are at their lowest level for 15 years, but that the work needs to continue with recommendations including improving the ways that education, children and health services work together.

(Also see:

[DCSF press release](#).)

The Government has plans to allow public sector bodies to take control of their own affairs to encourage greater community involvement.

These ideas could affect schools, hospitals, leisure centres and social care providers, meaning that teachers, parents, nurses and patients could have input into how their services are run.

(See:

[Labour's Plans for 'John Lewis' Public Services](#))

The National Council for Research has produced a brief on the [Characteristics of Bullying Victims in Schools](#). It finds that reports of bullying are more common in younger age groups, and that people with a disability or special education need are more likely to be bullied.

Girls are more likely to experience bullying at a younger age, but boys are more likely to be the victims of violence or theft. Young people from ethnic minority backgrounds are significantly less likely to report cases of bullying.

**The Queen's Speech Wednesday 18 November 2009
Sourced from Policy.**

The Independent has detailed (['Slimline' Queen's Speech to push financial reform](#)) measures to be included in the Queen's Speech (next Wednesday) not included in the Draft Legislative Programme that was published for consultation in the summer.

Additional Bills are set to include:

A Social Care Bill “to provide free care in their own homes for all elderly people with high needs and abolish means-testing for 350,000 people who currently have to pay for it. Many people with high needs, including those with serious dementia and Alzheimer's, will no longer have to sell their home to pay for care home bills”.

“The Queen's Speech will include a new wave of public service reforms to give more power to "patients and parents". Entitlements such having an operation within 18 weeks of seeing a GP will be converted into legal rights. There will be parallel moves on education.”

The Draft Legislative programme 09/10

The [Draft Legislative programme](#) has preceded the Queen's Speech for the last couple of years and it is open for consultation until 21 September 2009. All of the Bills are open for consultation from 29 June 2009 - 21 September 2009 – but some (the *Child Poverty Bill* and the *Equality Bill*) have already been introduced to Parliament.

[Improving schools and safeguarding children Bill](#)

This will underpin the [Your child, Your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system](#) – the *Education White Paper*, published on 30 June.

Includes proposals for new guarantees for pupils and parents; Strengthened Home-school agreements; Devolving power and funding to school leaders; A licence to teach will be introduced “similar to that used by other high-status professionals such as doctors and lawyers”; a single, overall school report card.

Also looks at clarifying the role of Ofsted and those inspecting Local safeguarding boards.

[Child Poverty Bill](#)

Already introduced, but to be largely considered in the next session.

Builds on the, probably unachievable, but non-the-less noble, target to abolish child poverty by 2020.

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