
From: TheInformationPoint@kent.gov.uk [mailto:TheInformationPoint@kent.gov.uk]

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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. 12 / 22 March 2010

If you would like to receive further information, please telephone or email the appropriate contact officer responsible. Alternatively, contact Tristan Godfrey on 01622 694196 or email tristan.godfrey@kent.gov.uk.

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Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Information

Date of next HOSC meeting: 26th March, 2010 at 10.00 am

Location: Proposed Venue: Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone

Health in Kent

“[Trauma teddies](#)” are to be handed out to children aged up to six who are involved in traffic accidents on Kent’s roads.

A Kent policeman suggested the idea explaining that comfort and reassurance is needed by young children rather than an explanation of events.

Tonbridge Community Hospital is under threat as West Kent NHS Trust has to save £150 million.

The hospital has 24 beds for local people who usually arrive for convalescence after an operation. Godfrey Horne, chairman of Tonbridge Community Hospital's League of Friends as well as chairman of Kent County Council's health overview and scrutiny committee, said that the [planned cuts should be opposed](#).

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Department of Health

Reform has published a new report which says that the number of hospital beds should be reduced by 30,000 as this would save money and could help fund more personalised treatment.

[*Fewer Hospitals, More Competition*](#) points out that the number of hospital beds has reduced by over a third in the last 20 years as medicine has moved to shorter periods of hospital treatment, but the NHS has accounted for 40% of the increase in public sector inputs between 1997 and 2007. It says that the NHS should not be immune from public spending reforms, and that the highest ratio of hospital beds per population is in London, the North East, and the North West.

It also points out that competition can help increase productivity, and health services could be expanded even when the numbers of hospitals and beds fall.

Also see: [‘Hospitals should axe thousands more beds’](#)

The PCT network says that greater joint-working across health and public services should be led locally but needs stronger national support.

The network has published a paper, [*Putting our Heads together, what makes senior joint posts work?*](#), which looks at the benefits which can come from joint posts and finds that a central re-think on the promotion of integrated care.

The drugs advisory committee are expected to recommend a ban on mephedrone.

Until post-mortem results become available it is unknown to what extent the substance caused the deaths of two teenagers this week, but Alan Campbell has said he would take immediate action once the committee reports, and Chris Grayling has said that the Conservatives would look at banning legal highs if they got into power.

See: [‘Drug Advisers will urge ban on Legal High’](#)

The MJ reports on a round table discussion about joint-working across health and local government.

The following action points were drawn up during the discussion:

- Develop agreements locally which encourage the transference of people between organisations
- Agreement of risk and benefits sharing on collaborative working
- Forge a connection between the personalised care agenda with the aspirations of Total Place
- Demonstrate courage and conviction at the local level, and give a focus on what we are trying to deliver
- Ensure partnerships have strong leadership
- A national steer on employment terms and conditions and pensions to allow people transference between agencies
- Get the administrative boundaries right, but this should be informed by the redesign of services
- The time to act is now and ensure any momentum is not wasted in the post election fall out

See: [‘A Healthy Collaboration’](#)

Maternity services for obese women are not good enough and may be putting mothers-to-be at risk, experts warn.

The Centre for Maternal and Child Enquiries said units were short of basic equipment like extra-wide operating tables and beds. Its poll of UK services also showed [obese pregnant women were not getting the right advice](#) and assessments.

A Department of Health spokeswoman said the UK remained "one of the safest countries in the world to have a baby".

The Government has also announced the launch of a strategic vision for the further transformation of maternity services and early years services. "[Maternity and Early Years - Making a Good Start to Family Life](#)"

Health Minister Mike O'Brien has announced that patients with very rare conditions will be given access to drugs and services not previously available on the NHS.

The proposals mean that a small number of [drugs and treatments for very rare conditions](#), that are not yet appropriate for the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) appraisal process, can now be considered for use in the NHS.

A new three-year £25m Innovation Pass pilot will be set up to help patients with rarer diseases access highly innovative new drugs as well as a new expert advisory group being formed.

New criteria defining entitlement to wheelchair and seating equipment is to be piloted aiming to standardise these criteria across the country.

Currently, local health trusts set their own criteria which means that [access and provision of wheelchairs vary](#). A key part of the pilot will be setting standards for delivering timely services so that patients do not have to wait too long to aids.

The Dept of Health is advising people travelling to the Southern Hemisphere, including the World Cup in South Africa, to be vaccinated against swine flu.

The Southern Hemisphere 'flu season is expected to start shortly and [vaccination will reduce the risk to travellers](#). In the UK new cases of pandemic H1N1 (2009) influenza remain as low as when the virus first appeared in the UK.

Fresh fruit and vegetables will be more widely available in low income areas of the South West, East Midlands and West Midlands after a successful pilot in the North east supported by Change4Life.

Local corner shops have had a [fruit and vegetable "makeover"](#) by stocking a wide range of fruit and vegetables, displaying Change4Life posters and signs, and appointing a member of staff to champion fresh fruit and vegetables in store.

The Government has published a joint implementation plan - [Building a safe and confident future](#): implementing the recommendations of the Social Work Task Force.

The implementation plan explains how the Government is now working, with employers, social work educators, the social work profession, and with people who use social work services, to develop that reform programme and put it in place.

The Dept of Health has published a strategic vision for the use of volunteers alongside paid health professionals in delivering care services in the future.

The report - [Volunteering: involving people and communities in delivering and developing health and social care services](#) - highlights the potential of using volunteers in terms of health, well-being and addressing health inequalities.

Care Quality Commission

The Care Quality Commission has announced plans to give 66 NHS trusts a licence to provide services under a new and tougher system for regulating standards.

To be registered, trusts must show they meet [new essential standards of quality and safety](#), which will be constantly monitored. The new standards cover important issues for patients such as treating people with respect, involving them in decisions about care, keeping clinical areas clean, and ensuring services are safe.

East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust, Eastern and Coastal Kent Primary Care Trust and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust are included in this first wave of 66 trusts.

The CQC has inspected every ambulance trust in the country based on the requirements of Infection Control regulations introduced in 2009.

Four trusts were found to be in breach of the government regulation to protect people from infection while six trusts had areas that needed improvement.

Read the full report - [Regulating for better care](#)

The CQC has published the 7th annual survey of NHS staff.

The purpose of the survey is to collect staff views about their experiences of working in their local NHS trust in order to improve working experience.

Compared to the 2008 findings there has been an increase in the proportion of staff who

- are satisfied with the quality of work and patient care they are able to deliver (now nearly three-quarters of staff);
- had health and safety training in the previous twelve months (more than three-quarters);
- were appraised with personal development plans in the last 12 months

Read the Full report - [Survey of NHS staff 2009](#)

Other Health Information

Infections spread by acupuncture needles are under-diagnosed worldwide, according to doctors in Hong Kong.

Writing in the British Medical Journal, they call for [tighter infection controls and regulation](#). Acupuncture is currently unregulated in the UK, but the government is consulting on the issue.

The British Acupuncture Council says their members follow a strict code of conduct which includes infection control measures.

Researchers in the US have identified a gene which may explain why non-smokers develop lung cancer.

However Cancer Research UK said [more work was needed](#) to establish the exact reason for the link.

A team of researchers at the University of Newcastle has found that seaweed could hold the answer to tackling obesity.

Alginate - a fibre found in sea kelp - [reduces the body's fat uptake](#) by more than 75% - better than most anti-obesity treatments.

The Kings Fund has published a new report looking at future funding models for social care.

The report – [Securing Good Care for More People](#) – recommends a revised version of the ‘partnership model’ between the state and the individual as the fairest way of funding social care in the future.

Health Secretary Andy Burnham is likely to announce that the so-called “death tax” – intended to pay for long term care – will not be introduced before the next election.

The government will instead set out a [phased approach towards a final reform](#) of care services although Mr. Burnham remains convinced that Britain’s aging population will need to contribute more to future care costs.

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