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## Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Bulletin No. 11 / 13 March 2010

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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

### Department of Health

#### Steele Review of NHS dentistry.

The call for pilot sites by the Steele implementation board, has resulted in nearly thirty dental practices around the country joined in a new pilot to test new ways of improving services for patients and the NHS from April with improved access and new ways of measuring quality.

See:

[Local NHS to trial new ways to improve dental services](#)

## **Manual for Cancer Services 2008**

The revised Manual of Cancer Services is an integral part of the NHS Cancer Plan, Cancer Reform Strategy and modernisation of cancer services. The document will support quality assurance of cancer services and enable quality improvement.

See:

[Manual for Cancer Services 2008: Cancer Research Network Measures](#)

## **New health inequalities tool allows local NHS to focus their resources.**

Public Health Minister Gillian Merron has launched a new internet application, which will allow local trusts to focus resources and tackle health inequalities by monitoring and responding to trends in infant mortality and life expectancy.

The Minister was speaking at the 'Marmot and The Third Sector' conference, an event which aimed to raise awareness amongst the Third Sector, and also an opportunity for delegates to respond to the Marmot review report 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives', identifying key areas for future action in health inequalities and providing a forum to develop an understanding of the role of the Third Sector in addressing health inequalities.

See:

[NHS better equipped to tackle local health inequalities](#)

## **Issues of health and social outcomes for former members of the Armed Forces.**

The report '[Health and social outcomes and health service experiences of UK military veterans: a summary of the evidence, November 2009](#)' reviewed the available evidence on the health and social outcomes, and the health experiences, of former members of the Armed Forces who returned to civilian life.

Key findings included that, whilst in general the health of the veteran community is comparable with that of the general population, there are barriers to accessing healthcare and especially the stigma of admitting a need for help.

## **Reports arising from the consultation 'Age equality in health and social care'.**

'Age equality in health and social care: a report on the consultation' is the report on the consultation that the Department of Health (DH) conducted from November 2009 to February 2010 on age equality in health and social care.

All the documents relating to this report are available on the Department of Health publications webpage.

See:

[Age equality in health and social care: a report on the consultation](#)

## **'Quit smoking' phone app.**

To coincide with 'No Smoking Day', Public Health Minister Gillian Merron has launched the first official NHS 'Quit Smoking' app for iPhone and iPod Touch to help people quit the habit.

Available from iTunes, [www.smokefree.nhs.uk](http://www.smokefree.nhs.uk) and NHS Choices, the app will:

- Provide daily hints and tips to manage cravings.
- Keep a running tally on how much money quitters have saved since they stopped smoking.
- Track the number of days, hours and minutes since quitting.

- Include a direct link to the stop smoking helpline so they can speak with an adviser when they need to.
- Help find local NHS Stop Smoking Services.

Public Health Minister Gillian Merron said:

‘Quitting smoking takes a lot of effort and willpower. It is the single best thing you can do to improve your health – significantly reducing the risk of serious conditions such as lung cancer and heart disease.’

See:

[Quit smoking with the help of your mobile](#)

## Public Health Observatories

The Public Health Observatories (PHO) celebrate their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a joint one-day conference with the Department of Health (DOH), and a keynote address by Sir Liam Donaldson, the Chief Medical Officer.

PHOs are designed to help make the smartest use of health data across the NHS and as such represent the largest concentration of public health intelligence across the UK which utilizes the expertise of over 150 public health professionals to turn information and data into meaningful health intelligence and to inform local practice. Successes include:

- the annual Health Profiles, providing a comprehensive snapshot of the health of every local authority population to underpin partnership working to improve health.
- the Health Inequalities Intervention Tools, showing the impact that interventions can make in reducing the health gaps between the most deprived and the rest of the population.

See:

[Smart use of health intelligence celebrated](#)

## New joint study ‘Inclusion Health’

A new short joint study by the Department for Health (DOH) and the Cabinet office Social Exclusion Task Force recognises the great progress that has been made in healthcare provision and outlines how improvements in health care for the most excluded groups in society can be accelerated to ensure high quality services are available to all.

The study [‘Inclusion Health: improving the way we meet the primary care needs of the socially excluded’](#) provides a framework for driving a step-change in outcomes for socially excluded groups, and launches an agenda that addresses the specific challenges of working with them, while going with the grain of wider health reforms.

It is supported by an evidence pack which brings together existing and new data and analysis on the health needs and outcomes of socially excluded groups, and highlights the challenges and opportunities within this field.

See:

[Inclusion Health](#)

[New study to drive further improvements in health care for the most vulnerable](#)

[Inclusion Health evidence pack](#)

## Universal Healthy Child Programme

The Department of Health (DOH) have published [‘Currency Options for the Healthy Child Programme: transforming community services’](#), a tool for commissioners to use in developing a more transparent, outcome based approach to pay for the community services element of the universal Healthy Child Programme from pregnancy to 5 years of age. The document proposes national currency options against which local pricing can be developed, based on local need.

See:

[Currency options for the Healthy Child Programme:](#)

## Shaping local response

The Department of Health (DOH) has published guidance [‘The NHS quality, innovation, productivity and prevention challenge: an introduction for clinicians’](#) to support clinical teams and NHS organisations to meet the quality and productivity challenge and provide ways in which NHS clinicians can all get involved in shaping the response locally.

## Review of the effectiveness of new controls on infant formula and follow-on formula

The Department of Health (DOH) has published [‘Report of the Independent Review Panel conducting the Independent Review of the Controls on Infant Formula and Follow-on Formula’](#) which reviewed the effectiveness of new controls in the new Infant Formula and Follow on Formula Regulations 2007 (SI 2007/3521).

See:

[Report of the Independent Review Panel conducting the Independent Review of the Controls on Infant Formula and Follow-on Formula](#)

## Support in the workplace for carers

Business, Government and charity leaders today backed better support for staff who balance a job with caring for an older or disabled person.

Ministers also announced that six Government departments will sign a Memorandum of Understanding – an agreement with Employers for Carers on how they will work in partnership to develop and promote support for carers in the workplace. This will include guidance for employers and raising awareness of employees’ right to request flexible working.

See

[Call for employers to be ‘carer friendly’](#)

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## Government

### Government response to ‘A better future’

[‘A better future: a consultation on a future strategy for adults with autistic spectrum conditions: the Government response’](#) is a post-consultation report for the consultation paper ‘A Better Future: a consultation on a future strategy for adults with autistic spectrum conditions’.

This document is the Government response to the consultation, which ran from April to September, and covered five key themes:-

- social inclusion.
- health.
- choice and control.
- awareness raising and training.
- access to training and employment.

See:

[A better future: a consultation on a future strategy for adults with autistic spectrum conditions:the Government response](#)

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## Parliament

### Political jargon

Commons leader Harriet Harman has argued that she is a 'victim of an unfair banning order', following the Local Government Association (LGA) report on political jargon, which branded the term 'welllderly' as impenetrable. Previously, Ms Harman had coined the term to describe 'a new cohort of well, active, older people'.

But during questions on future Commons business, Liberal Democrat business spokesperson David Heath called for a debate on political 'jargon', and noted the terms coined by Ms. Harman.

See:

[Harman defies 'welllderly' ban](#)

### Assisted dying

Former health secretary Patricia Hewitt has called for a major public inquiry to consider the law on assisted suicide and urged Parliament to 'have the courage to tackle controversial issues'. Leading an adjournment debate the Minister welcomed recent guidelines on assisted dying from director of public prosecutions Keir Starmer QC, but said they did not go far enough.

See:

[Assisted suicide law 'needs change'](#)

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## Other Health Information

### Talking therapies

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) reports that the mental health charity Mind has teamed up with the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) and the Royal College of Psychiatrists to launch a new campaign calling for better access to psychological therapies. Launched last week the campaign challenges all of the political parties to support the roll-out of talking therapies, and other evidence-based psychological therapies. In addition, the campaign emphasises the patient's right to nationally-approved treatments, drugs and programmes, recommended by NICE for use in the NHS, as enshrined in the NHS Constitution.

NICE guidelines, such as those for depression, recommend several psychological therapies for people who have mental health problems.

See:

[Campaign launched to improve access to NICE-approved talking therapies](#)

### Proposals for a National Care Service

The Telegraph reports that under plans for a National Care Service to be shortly announced, middle class pensioners will choose between delaying retirement or being taxed on their inheritance after death.

A final decision on the best way of funding personal care for the ageing population is due within weeks, with ministers said to favour a compulsory, comprehensive model based on the National Health Service. Elderly people would be able to choose between a range of payment methods, including making regular cash deposits, through an inheritance levy, or by continuing to work beyond the state retirement age.

See:

[Elderly face inheritance tax to fund care plans](#)

[Millions face 10% death tax: Middle class hit hardest by Labour plan to fund elderly care](#)

### **Audit Commission report 'A healthy balance'**

An Audit Commission report '[Healthy balance: a review of public health performance and spending](#)' estimates that £21 billion of NHS funds has been allocated in 2009/10 on the basis of health inequalities. Despite the health of the nation improving overall, health inequalities has proved a stubborn area to address.

The report highlights some of the variation in success among different localities, particularly for teenage pregnancies. Despite the sums of money allocated, it is not always clear how much has been spent on improving health inequalities and what the impact has been. It is hard to see an obvious link between spending and improvement, or get any clear view of value for money.

See:

[Healthy balance](#)

[Health gap widens despite NHS billions: Audit Commission](#)

### **House of Commons Select Health Committee report on Social Care**

The House of Commons Select Health Committee has published '[Social care](#)' which reports on the Committee's findings from their inquiry into the future of social care services.

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