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## Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Bulletin No. 13 / 26 March 2010

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### Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Information

**Date of next HOSC meeting:** Friday, 14 May 2010, 10am

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

### Department of Health

**New designs to improve patients' privacy and dignity have been unveiled by Ann Keen.**

These [design prototypes](#) were created by teams of leading designers and manufacturers and include a universal patient gown which is more dignified and comfortable, a BedPod, and new screening systems which would separate male and female ward areas.

**The introduction of the National Service Framework for Coronary Heart Disease in March 2000 has seen the number of people dying of heart disease fall by 47%.**

In [the last ten years](#) the number of cardiologists has risen by 78% with over 50% more cardiothoracic surgeons. All acute trusts now have Rapid Access Chest Pain clinics, and there are 3,000 defibrillators available in the community.

**The Department of Health will contribute £4.35bn to the savings that need to be made across government departments.**

The majority of [these savings](#) are expected to be made by bringing down procurement costs, but the department also hopes to save £555m by reducing staff sickness absences.

**An independent review to assess the UK response to the swine flu pandemic has been set up.**

[The review](#) will be chaired by Dame Deirdre Hine, and will report back before the summer recess of parliament; there have been 457 swine flu related deaths across the UK so far.

**The NHS could use its expertise and services to generate funding from other organisations and overseas.**

Andy Burnham has said that, with increased overseas demand for sharing knowledge and replicating services, [NHS Global would be set up](#) to help the organisations of the NHS take advantage of the opportunities. Some institutions, such as Moorfields Eye Hospital are already sharing their expertise internationally.

**The NHS shows a healthy financial forecast with most trusts performing well, all patients continued to be treated within 18 weeks from their referrals.**

The [latest quarterly report](#) from the DG for NHS Finance, Performance and Operations has been released.

## Care Quality Commission

**A second wave of NHS trusts to be licensed under the new regulating standards has been announced.**

The [new list](#) includes the Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership, but this is on a list of 10 which need urgent improvements around the safety and quality of care before they can be registered.

## Other Health Information

**A key NHS target is compromising care and patient safety.**

The College of Emergency Medicine says the target - [to treat people visiting accident and emergency units within four hours](#) - puts staff under "incredible pressure". It says it supports having a target in principle, but that doctors sometimes need time to make the right decision. The NHS target in England to deal with patients in A&E within four hours has been highly controversial, but the government says safety and good quality care should always take priority over targets.

**Accident and Emergency benchmarking launched to help compare performance.**

The [Foundation Trust Network](#) has launched the UK's first project to benchmark the performance of accident and emergency services. This will help NHS trusts to compare performance, and find efficient ways of working that will make better use of NHS funds.

The project is timed to help trusts deliver improvements in A&E in time for winter when they will face increased pressures. It will run from May to August 2010 with a workshop in September 2010 to discuss the findings.

The programme is open to all Foundation Trust Network members. Trusts interested in participating are encouraged to register by 12 April 2010.

### **Doctors call for a ban on smoking in vehicles in order to protect children from passive smoking.**

The [Royal College of Physicians](#) wants England's imminent review of anti-smoking laws to consider such measures to protect the young. It says passive smoking results in 300,000 extra child visits to GPs in the UK every year for problems such as asthma and bacterial meningitis. But driving and smoking lobby groups say cars are a "private space".

A number of medical bodies have supported a ban on smoking in cars transporting children, but the RCP goes a significant step further, urging a blanket ban on anyone lighting up in a vehicle - regardless of whether children or indeed any other passengers are inside.

The report [Passive Smoking and Children](#) calls for a two-pronged approach which would see children protected from second-hand smoke and shielded from the sight of adults smoking - whether in the playground or on the TV.

The full report is not freely available. Please contact The Information Point if you would like to see a copy.

Also see: [Public Health Priorities](#)  
[‘Ban smoking in all vehicles, doctors demand’](#)

### **Raising the price of alcohol would have health benefits for all drinkers, not just the heaviest, say researchers.**

Setting the [minimum cost at 50p per unit of alcohol](#) would save up to 50,000 people from illness in a decade, the Sheffield University team calculates. Most of the harm reduction would be for people aged 45 and older with chronic ill health, especially cardiovascular disease, they say in the Lancet. But retailers say minimum pricing penalises responsible drinkers.

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