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Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Bulletin No. 09/ 26 February 2010

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

The Law Commission has published a consultation on proposals to redesign the [laws governing adult social care](#).

The proposal is to condense the current array of statutes and regulations into a single adult social care act that will form the basis for cross-party legislation in the next parliament. The single act aims to bring clarification to current legislation rather than to change existing entitlements but will better protect vulnerable adults, offer clearer rights to carers, and cut down on litigation.. The Commission estimates that its proposals would realise savings of £10m-£15m a year in social workers' time and complaints about the system.

The proposed single act would affect almost 1.8 million people receiving social care from their local councils, together with more than 6 million informal carers.

Launch date: 24 February 2010
Closing date: 1 July 2010

See also: [Law Commission proposes streamlining adult social care laws](#)

Strategy for services for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

The Department of Health (DOH) has launched a consultation on [‘Strategy for services for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary disease \(COPD\) in England](#).

The aim is to produce a strategy that will:

- ensure that everyone diagnosed with COPD receives equitable, responsive, high quality and effective provision of health and social

- care services from the right person, at the right time, in the right place, that are cost effective and provide good value for money for taxpayers.
- advise how local communities can prevent people getting COPD, understand the risks of having poor lung health, secure improvements to the diagnosis and care of people with the disease, and reduce health inequalities.
 - support people with COPD and their carers by offering practical advice and education on managing their disease.

The consultation documents are all available on the [Consultations webpage](#).

This consultation will be open until 6 April 2010

NHS Boards

The NHS National Leadership Council has launched [‘The Healthy NHS Board: Principles for Good Governance’](#) which highlights the critical role boards play in ensuring that quality, centred on patient safety, effective care and patient experience, is at the heart of the NHS.

The guidance emphasises that good governance is essential for the NHS and explains clearly what this means for health organisations and their boards. Boards have key roles and responsibilities, including formulating strategy, ensuring accountability and shaping a positive culture for their organisation. See:

[Launch of The Healthy NHS Board: Principles for Good Governance Board Exchange prototype](#)

Mid Staffordshire Foundation Trust

Robert Francis QC has today published his Inquiry report into Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust. His Inquiry followed concerns about standards of care at the Trust, and an investigation and report published by the Healthcare Commission in March 2009. Robert Francis has heard evidence from patients, their relatives and staff to inform his report and the 18 recommendations he makes. The Department of Health and the Trust Board has accepted the recommendations of the Inquiry in full.

See:

[Robert Francis Inquiry report into Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust](#)
[CQC responds to Mid Staffordshire Inquiry Report – regulator says it intends to register the trust, but with conditions](#)
[FTN statement on Mid Staffordshire](#)

Back pain therapy

Research published in the Lancet indicates that a form of group ‘talking therapy’ is a cheap, effective way to alleviate low back pain, with the positive effect seen up to a year after the short six-session therapy programme.

In the study, 400 people being treated in general practice were offered the six group therapy sessions and 200 people receiving standard care were

monitored for a year. The sessions - based loosely around a technique called cognitive behaviour therapy - were set up to discuss beliefs around doing physical activity and counter negative thoughts about back pain and its restrictions as well as relaxation techniques.

See:

[Back pain 'eased by group therapy sessions'](#)

Heart Attacks

A Danish study indicates that temporarily stopping blood flow in the arm prevents damage in people having a heart attack, as it is thought the procedure "kick-starts" natural mechanisms in the heart to counter the lack of oxygen.

In a study of around 150 patients, those who were treated this way in the ambulance on the way to hospital sustained less damage to heart tissue. The British Heart Foundation said The Lancet study was "interesting" but more research was needed.

See:

[Stemming arm blood protects heart during attack](#)

Policy on assisted suicide

The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Keir Starmer, QC has published the policy on assisted suicide [‘Policy for Prosecutors in Respect of Cases of Encouraging or Assisting Suicide’](#) after taking into account responses received from the consultation in September 2009.

Mr Starmer said: ‘The policy is now more focused on the motivation of the suspect rather than the characteristics of the victim. The policy does not change the law on assisted suicide. It does not open the door for euthanasia. It does not override the will of Parliament. What it does is to provide a clear framework for prosecutors to decide which cases should proceed to court and which should not.’

See:

[DPP publishes assisted suicide policy](#)

[Relatives who helped loved ones to die fear rise in botched DIY suicides](#)

Review to look at how sexualised images affect children and young people

A review [‘Sexualisation of young people’](#) has been published as part of the Government’s strategy to address violence against women and girls.

The review, by author and psychologist Dr Linda Papadopoulos was commissioned by the Home Office to look at how sexualised images and messages may be affecting the development of children and young people and influencing cultural norms. She also examined the evidence of a link between sexualisation and violence.

See:

[Review into sexualisation of young people published](#)

[Violence against women and girls](#)

[‘Why can’t I look like that?’ ask teenagers](#)

Teenaged pregnancies

Figures released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) indicate that the number of teenage pregnancies in England and Wales has fallen by 4%, with a total of 41,325 under 18 who pregnancies in 2008, compared with 42,988 pregnancies in 2007. Of these young women 49% had an abortion, compared with 50% in 2007.

The Government had pledged in 1999 to halve teenage pregnancy rates among under-18s in England by this year but is widely expected to miss that target.

See:

[Teenage pregnancy rate falls](#)

Improving access to Psychological Therapy Services.

[‘Realising the Benefits: the IAPT programme at full roll-out’](#) details the next steps in the move towards the full roll out of Improving Access to Psychological Therapy services. The guidance provides support for established and developing services, focusing on quality standards and analysing the progress that has been made in rolling out services to date.

See:

[Realising the benefits: IAPT at full roll-out](#)

NHS system for the early detection and prevention of serious failures

The Department of Health (DOH) has published [‘Review of early warning systems in the NHS’](#) which describes the systems and process, and values and behaviours which make up a system for the early detection and prevention of serious failures.

The report represents the shared view of DOH, Monitor and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and argues that safeguarding patients is paramount, and the responsibility of every organisation and every member of staff within the NHS. The report also makes a series of recommendations which have been accepted by the Department of Health.

See also:

[Review of Early Warning Systems in the NHS](#)

[CQC comments on National Quality Board review of early warning systems in the NHS](#)

Ministerial Group on Dementia

The first meeting of the Ministerial Group on Dementia, which brings together charities, scientists, research bodies and Government officials has set objectives to drive up the volume, quality and impact of research with the three focal points of enabling scientists get access to key research funding , developing a strategy for increasing public support for dementia research and providing advice on Government dementia policy and on wider national and international initiatives.

Care Services Minister Phil Hope said:

'Dementia is one of the most important issues we face as the population ages. Research is the key to developing new treatments, transforming care and ultimately finding a cure for this devastating condition.'

See:

[DOH press release: Experts unite to boost dementia research](#)

[Experts unite to boost dementia research](#)

[National Dementia Strategy](#)

Food Standards Agency Science and Evidence Strategy

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has published the organisation's new Science and Evidence Strategy 2010–15 and Evidence Plan 2010 setting out how science and evidence will be used to improve food safety and the balance of people's diets.

The strategy describes the activities the FSA will carry out to make sure they get the right evidence and use it effectively to support delivery of the overall Strategy for 2010–2015. The strategy will also help measure progress, inform development of future work, and support delivery in the long term, and has been developed in consultation with science advisers, partners and stakeholders.

See:

[Science strategy](#)

The NHS should stop funding homeopathy, MPs say.

The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee said using public money on the highly-diluted remedies [could not be justified](#). The cross-party group said there was no evidence beyond a placebo effect, when a patient gets better because of their belief that the treatment works.

But manufacturers and supporters of homeopathy disputed the report, saying the MPs had ignored important evidence. It is thought about £4m a year is spent on homeopathy by the NHS, helping to fund four homeopathic hospitals in London, Bristol, Liverpool and Glasgow and numerous prescriptions.

[Read the full committee report](#)

Health sector apprenticeships

Health Secretary Andy Burnham has announced that the health sector has exceeded its aim to recruit 5,000 public sector apprentices. Last year both the NHS and social care services agreed to provide a major contribution to the Prime Minister's commitment, made in February 2009, to increase the number of apprenticeships by 21,000 across the public sector.

Speaking before the NHS National Apprenticeship Conference at Westminster Hall, Andy Burnham said:

'I am delighted that we have hit the target to create an extra 5,000 apprentices. Apprenticeships are an excellent way of giving young people the

chance to learn life-changing skills and offer a genuine opportunity to train clinical staff. ‘

See:

[Achievement of target to create 5,000 health apprenticeships](#)

Healthy eating

A conference to promote healthy eating across South East schools is scheduled for Thursday 25 February, when the emphasis of the day, which has been organised by the Department of Health South East, will focus on bringing together perspectives from children, catering staff, head teachers, nutritionists, and academics to celebrate and showcase work across the region, and increase the number of children taking school meals.. The delegates will be able to discuss practical strategies with each other in terms of school meals uptake in their own area.

See:

[School Meals Are The Real Deal](#)

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