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Health in Kent

The BBC report that a Freedom of Information request has indicated that South East Coast Ambulance (Secamb) has missed Government targets of reaching 75% of "category A" calls in eight minutes in seven areas between April 2010 and March 2011.

The BBC argue that the average response figure across the county was 74.9%. 75% of the category A targets were missed in Ashford, Dover, Sevenoaks, Shepway, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells. But 54.9% of the 3,064 calls Secamb received from Sevenoaks and 66.1% of 3,233 calls in Tonbridge and Malling reached targets.

See:

[Ambulances missing response targets in parts of Kent](#)

Demos has published a report looking at how the cuts to social care budgets across the country have affected people with disabilities and how well the local authorities have been coping with the cuts.

Kent was found to be [coping well](#), ranking 14th out of 152 councils on areas having the least impact on to the front-line, according to figures Demos got using the Freedom of Information Act. According to [Coping with the Cuts](#) no region is doing markedly better than others with the top and bottom performing authorities being widely spread across the regions.

Department of Health

The Department of Health (DOH) has launched [‘Caring for our future: shared ambitions for care and support’](#) an engagement with people who use care and support services, carers, local councils, care providers, and the voluntary sector about the priorities for improving care and support.

The [Caring for Our Future engagement exercise](#) which follows on from the report of the [Commission on Funding of Care and Support](#), will run for the next three months, and aims to use the report as the basis for engagement as a key part of a wider care and support reform agenda. As part of [Caring for Our Future](#), the Government also wants to hear people’s views on the recommendations made by the Commission on Funding of Care and Support and how we should assess these proposals, including in relation to other potential priorities for improvement. See:

[Discussions start on improving care and support](#)

[Caring for our future: shared ambitions for care and support](#)

The engagement will run from 15th September 2011 until early December 2011.

The Department of Health (DOH), in conjunction with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), has launched two public consultations concerning proposals for independent prescribing for physiotherapists and podiatrists.

The first consultation [‘Proposals to introduce independent prescribing by podiatrists’](#) seeks views on the proposal for podiatrists to become independent prescribers of medicines.

The consultation also proposes that podiatrist independent prescribers are allowed to mix licensed medicines prior to administration and direct others to mix, and to be able to prescribe independently from a limited list of controlled drugs. This would be achieved primarily by changes to the Medicines Act 1968 and the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001.

The second consultation [‘Proposals to introduce independent prescribing by physiotherapists’](#) seeks views on proposals for physiotherapists to become independent prescribers of medicines.

The consultation also proposes that physiotherapist independent prescribers are allowed to mix licensed medicines prior to administration and direct others to mix, and to be able to prescribe independently from a limited list of controlled drugs. This would be achieved primarily by changes to the Medicines Act 1968 and the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001.

See also:

[Proposals to introduce independent prescribing for physiotherapists and podiatrists](#)

Both consultations will run from 15 September to 8 December 2011.

The Department of Health (DOH) will launch an awareness campaign to increase make people aware of the early signs of bowel cancer.

The campaign ‘Be Clear on Cancer’ aims to raise an awareness of the early signs of bowel cancer and make it easier for patients to discuss this with their GP.

See:

[Bowel cancer awareness campaign to go national](#)

[Successful Government cancer campaign to go national](#)

Government

The Department of Education has launched a consultation on auxiliary aids for children with disabilities

A consultation on implementing the requirement for schools and local authorities to make reasonable adjustments to provide auxiliary aids for disabled children [under the Equality Act 2010](#). Although the Equality Act covers England, Scotland and Wales, this consultation covers England only as parallel consultations will be taking place in Scotland and Wales.

[Read the consultation document on-line](#)

The consultation runs from 12 September to 5 December 2011.

The House of Commons Public Accounts Select Committee has published a report that examines value for money in the provision of ambulance services.

The report '[Transforming NHS ambulance services](#)' Performance will not be improved, nor will unwarranted variation be eradicated, until ambulance services have consistent information so that their performance can be compared with others

The House of Commons Select Health Committee annual review of the work of the Care Quality Commission (CQC), argues that the shift in the bias of CQC work away from the core function of inspection, represents a significant distortion of the organisation's priorities. The Select Committee report '[Annual accountability hearing with the Care Quality Commission](#)' based on findings from the hearing with CQC, argues that the regulator has not maintained a balance between the activities of compliance and registration and has identified the following factors which they argue contributed to this distortion of priorities:

The CQC was originally established without a sufficiently clear and realistic definition of its priorities and objectives.

The timescale and resource implications of the functions of the CQC, in particular the legal requirement to introduce universal registration of primary and social care providers, were not properly analysed.

The registration process itself was not properly tested and proven before it was rolled out.

The CQC failed to draw the implications of these failures adequately to the attention of ministers, Parliament and the public.

See:

[MPs criticise distortion of priorities at key health care regulator](#)

The House of Commons Health Select Committee has released the first annual accountability hearing report with Monitor, the independent regulator of NHS Foundation Trusts.

The Health Committee report '[Annual accountability hearing with Monitor](#)' set out the following conclusions:-

The committee strongly supports the view that the standards for authorizing Foundation Trusts must not fall as a result of the Government's desire to see all remaining NHS Trusts become Foundation Trusts.

Welcomes the extension of Monitor's oversight powers for Foundation Trusts to 2016, and the fact that the powers will then be reviewed.

Welcomes the fact that Monitor's new role, as set out in the Health and Social Care Bill, has been more clearly defined, following the Future Forum process.

See:

[MPs welcome strengthened role for Monitor in the oversight of Foundation Trusts](#)

The House of Commons Library has released a Standard Note on NHS Finance. The Note '[NHS funding and expenditure](#)' focuses on the structure, funding process and expenditure of the NHS in England

See:

Parliament

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday 12th September

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[Alcoholic drinks](#)

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HOUSE OF LORDS

Monday 12th September 2011

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[Autism: Personal Independence Payments](#) – Question

Written Answers

[Drugs: Pyridostigmine Bromide](#) - Question

[Health: GP Commissioning Groups](#) - Questions

Tuesday 13th September 2011

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[Cyclists: Accidents](#) - Question

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[Health: Chromosomal Aberrations](#) - Question

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Thursday 15 September 2011

Debates and Oral Answers

[Welfare Reform Bill](#) - Order of Consideration Motion

[NHS Future Forum](#) – Debate

Written Statements

[Care Services](#) – Statement

[Health: Complaints and Litigation](#) - Statement

Written Answers

Care Quality Commission

The Care Quality Commission has published its third annual report

The latest [State of Care](#) report covers the year to the end of March 2011, and is the first in which evidence obtained under the new system of regulation is used.

The report is divided into four main sections:

The shape of health and social care provision

Access to care services

Choice and control

Quality and safety

It also includes case studies looking at how improvements in standards have been made by services, and how the commission has helped drive improvements.

See also:

[NHS Confederation statement on CQC State of Care report](#)

Other Health Information

Scientists in the Netherlands investigating how tumours develop resistance to treatments, have produced research which indicates that fish oil supplements can impede the action of chemotherapy drugs.

The research published in the journal *Cancer Cell* indicates that two fatty acids found in fish oils begin a series of chemical reactions, which mean cancerous cells become resistant to chemotherapy.

See:

[Fish oils block chemotherapy drug](#)

A study funded by the British Academy Centenary Research Project, and undertaken by researchers from the University of Oxford in collaboration with other European and US researchers aimed to investigate the role of laughter in social bonding and the relationship to the release of endorphins in the body

The small study, comprising a series of six experimental studies was initiated to investigate the link between relaxed social laughter and feelings of wellbeing and the role laughter plays in social interaction between people.

Specifically, the researchers were testing the theory that the physical act of laughing generates feelings of wellbeing and what the biological explanation for this might be. The research did not look at whether or not laughter can be beneficial as pain relief in a medical context. But the limitations of the methodology of the study which used pain thresholds as an indirect measure of endorphin release, could lead to inaccurate interpretation.

For all the relevant links:

See:

[Does laughter increase tolerance to pain?](#)

An analysis of two prospective cohort studies by researchers from Harvard Medical School and Brigham Women's Hospital, aimed to try to determine factors that were associated with the development of kidney cancer.

In the study, researchers wanted to analyse data from prospective cohort studies, looking long term at lifestyle factors and people's use of painkillers, in order to investigate the potential association between use of painkillers and renal cancer.

For all the relevant links:

See:

[Long-term painkiller use linked to cancer risk](#)

A new report shows how Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) have helped to improve child protection

The report [Good practice by Local Safeguarding Children Boards](#) published by Ofsted provides practical examples and detailed case studies of how some boards are helping to improve child protection services.

See: [The Ofsted press release](#)

The National Audit Office warns that greater safeguards are needed to protect people from failing care services.

The NAO's report [Oversight of User Choice and Provider Competition in Care](#) says that the government needs to ensure patient protection when a firm runs into financial trouble as happened recently with Southern Cross homes. The [Department of Health](#) says it is already considering whether to oversee the £23bn market more closely.

The report also found that most people who use personal budgets to pay for their social care report improved wellbeing but a small minority said they were worse off. Local authorities are responsible for those who fund their own care if they run out of money but according to the NAO research, few were found to offer formal support to help prevent people falling back on the state.

The Royal College of Midwives (RCM) says that a rise in the birth rate has led to a shortage of midwives in parts of England

An extra 4,700 midwives are needed across England to keep pace with the added pressures of a rise in the birth rate, and obese and older mothers who often need extra support.

The [RCM](#) highlights the East Midlands and the East as the worst hit areas.

According to the figures, the North East and North West had a shortfall of less than 10%, whilst the East Midlands and East of England need 41% more midwives, and the South East is also more than a third short of staff.

The Department of Health said record numbers of midwives were being trained.

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