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Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Bulletin No. 34 **21 August 2009**

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The Children, Schools and Families Committee is to undertake an inquiry into Sure Start Children's Centres. The inquiry will examine whether the Children's Centres model of integrated services for under-5s and their families promotes early childhood development and is an effective response to deprivation.

The inquiry will also look at how the policy is being delivered, including:

- How models of Children's Centres have developed as the programme spreads from the most deprived neighbourhoods
- The range and effectiveness of services provided by Children's Centres
- Funding, sustainability and value for money
- Staffing, governance, management and strategic planning
- How well Children's Centres work with other partners and services, especially schools and health services
- Whether services are being accessed by those most in need and how effective they are for the most vulnerable.

The deadline for written evidence submissions is 12 October 2009.

(See:

[Committee launch Sure Start Children's Centres inquiry](#)

The Boorman Review, the independent review which was commissioned by Government to investigate and improve the health and well-being of NHS staff in the workplace, has now published the interim report ['The NHS Health and Well-being Review: interim report'](#) setting out emerging findings and initial recommendations on NHS staff health and well-being. The report, based on evidence gathered across the NHS, sets out the business case and basis for change and makes recommendations for improvement in provision of staff healthcare and well-being, and is designed to enable staff and stakeholders, within the NHS and beyond, to seize this opportunity to affect how the Department of Health (DoH) and the NHS will address this critical issue and influence the final outcomes of the Review which is scheduled for publication later this year.

The report and all relevant documents are available on the interim report webpage of the NHS Health and Wellbeing Boorman Review website.

(See:

[Interim Report](#)

[Healthier NHS staff will improve patient care and save money](#)

[NHS health and well-being: Boorman review](#)

An independent advisory group convened by The King's Fund and chaired by Dame Carol Black argues that new research is needed into the clinical and cost effectiveness of the complementary therapies used by millions of Britons every year to improve and manage their health. The report '*Assessing complementary practice: building consensus on appropriate research methods*' is the result of debate between experts in the fields of medical research, funding and practice, and argues that despite the increasing popularity of treatments like acupuncture, reflexology and osteopathy, the evidence as to whether and how they work is scarce, leaving the practices open to criticism. In addition, lack of agreement on the best methods to test the efficacy and effectiveness of complementary therapies has proved an obstacle to addressing this problem. The report hopes to establish a consensus on the ways in which research might be conducted that both the conventional and complementary health care communities can support.

The report '[Assessing complementary practice: building consensus on appropriate research methods: report of an independent advisory group](#)' is available on the King's Fund publication pages.

(See also:
[Summary](#))

The Department of Health (DOH) have published '*NHS cancelled operations, quarter ending 30 June 2009*'. The statistics and information on cancelled operations relates to the number of cancelled operations and breaches of standard. Data is also available on the total number of operating theatres and those which are dedicated day case theatres.

The key points from the latest release are:

- During the quarter ending 30 June 2009, 14,036 operations were cancelled at the last minute for non-clinical reasons. In the same period in 2008, there were 14,543 cancelled operations.
- Cancelled operations during the quarter represented 0.8% of all elective activity, compared to 0.9% in the same period in 2008.
- Of these cancellations, 561 (4.0%) of patients were not treated within 28 days of a cancellation. In the same period in 2008, 669 (4.6%) of patients were not treated within 28 days.

The report is available on the [publications and statistics](#) web page of the DOH.

Ahead of the new school year, the World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) has warned that [sandwich fillers such as processed meat, ham and salami](#) could mean that children that **increase their risk of developing cancer later in life. The WCRF argue that there is convincing scientific evidence that eating processed meat increases bowel cancer risk and recommends people avoid eating processed meat. In the UK, scientists estimate about 3,700 bowel cancer cases could be prevented if everyone ate less than 70g of processed meat a week, which is roughly the equivalent of three rashers of bacon.**

The research has not specifically looked at the effect of eating processed meat in childhood, but because the evidence in adults is convincing, and it makes sense for children to begin to adopt a healthy adult eating pattern from the age of five. WCRF advises it is best for children to avoid it as well as many of the habits we develop as children last into adulthood.

(See also:

[Meat on the Menu?](#)

[Charity seeks end to lunchbox ham](#))

Scientists at The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) have for the first time found [inherited genetic variants](#) that increase the risk that children will develop the most common type of leukaemia, and published the results online in Nature Genetics.

The researchers say the findings are important because it brings them a major step closer to understanding the complex process by which the most common form of cancer in children, acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL), develops.

The researchers argue that most cancers are thought to be triggered by a combination of factors, including environmental exposure, inherited genetic susceptibility and chance. For childhood ALL, scientists at the ICR have previously found that a blood cell mutation occurring before birth and other mutations acquired after birth, are involved and are perhaps triggered by common childhood infections. So while ALL does not appear to run in families, the ICR scientists have for the first time identified that inherited risk factors are also involved in its development.

(See also:

[Child leukaemia 'genes' revealed](#)

The Government rejected advice from an independent panel which recommended that most people with swine flu symptoms take paracetamol rather than [Tamiflu](#).

The panel, set up by the Department of Health, said that mass prescriptions of Tamiflu would help the virus to develop resistance, according to the Guardian.

It reported that ministers ignored this advice, fearing that a "public backlash" if anti-viral drugs were withheld.

Professor Robert Dingwall of the Committee on Ethical Aspects of Pandemic Influenza, explained: "Some people [on the panel] wanted to take a long term view of the risk of resistance developing and to seek to preserve the effectiveness of anti-virals for the next pandemic, which may be more severe."

(See also:

[Ministers ignored advice on mass issue of Tamiflu](#)

Health secretary Andy Burnham has challenged David Cameron to [prove Conservative support for the NHS is more than just "skin deep"](#) and has called on the Tory leader to punish Daniel Hannan, the MEP who went on US television to call the NHS a '60-year-old mistake'.

The Labour frontbencher suggested in a letter that Cameron should withdraw the whip from Hannan for his comments against the British healthcare system, and has also called on Cameron to ban from the Tory conference members of the Atlantic Bridge group which used the NHS 'in their fight against President Obama's health reforms', arguing that 'by taking these steps you could begin to reassure the British people that your colleagues' commitment to the NHS is not just skin deep'.

Also

Mr. Burnham has also warned that the Conservatives would turn the National Health Service into the '[biggest quango in the world](#)' if they win at the next election. Writing in the Guardian, Mr Burnham emphasised how the Conservative proposals would create 'substantial dividing lines', such as handing day-to-day control of the NHS to an independent board

(See also:

[NHS campaign prompts policy row](#)

[Gordon Brown puts NHS at heart of election](#)

[Cameron: Back Tories for NHS reform](#)

Transport secretary Lord Adonis has launched a government campaign to make [drug driving 'socially unacceptable'](#).

The Department of Transport on Monday unveiled the first nationwide campaign to target drivers who take drugs, with a series of adverts costing more than £2m to highlight the dangers.

The Department for Transport (DfT) figures suggest that one in five drivers killed in road accidents may have been under the influence of an impairing drug.

Speaking on BBC Radio 4's Today programme, Lord Adonis explained that the government wants to make drug driving as 'socially unacceptable' as drink driving.'

The Audit Commission have published [‘Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust \(RN7\) PbR results 2008/09’](#). The results are from the Payment by Results (PbR) Data Assurance Framework clinical coding audit undertaken during 2008/09 for Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust.

The LGA has announced the new chairs of its boards, with David Rogers from East Sussex continuing to head up the Community Wellbeing Board. KCC currently has 2 board members, Paul Carter is on the Children and Young People Board, whilst Kevin Lynes is on the Regeneration & Transport Board.

(See:

[LGA unveils New Board Chairs](#)

The House of Commons Library have published a Standard Note on [‘Overcrowded Housing’](#). The note argues that the current statutory overcrowding standard in Part X of the 1985 Housing Act has not been updated since 1935, and this note explains the current standard, efforts to update the standard, and the Government's approach to tackling the problem.

The Institute of Employment Studies for Department of Health have published a series of information and guidance resources to help NHS organisations and staff understand the benefits of conducting and participating in the NHS staff survey and to improve services for patients. The resources are available on the [new publications webpage](#) of the Department of Health (DOH) website.

The Department of Health (DOH) has published a letter from Gary Belfield, Director General of Commissioning and System Management (Acting) for the Department of Health (DOH) which contains updates on the World Class Commissioning (WCC) programme for the summer period. The letter also includes updates on the launch of assurance year two, the PBC National Clinical Network, a new film showcasing PBC in action, some new support and development resources and an update on the programme of Integrated Care Pilots (ICP).

The letter is available on the [publications web page](#) of the DOH website.

Council leaders have responded to claims that they are wasting resources by financing [healthy lifestyle schemes](#).

The Taxpayers Alliance has claimed that local government schemes to improve residents' health and well-being are beyond the core services which councils should be concentrating resources on.

The LGA has responded by saying that these scheme swill have a long term benefit in areas such as tackling obesity.

Unison has warned that an [adult social services incident](#) on a par with the Baby Peter case is likely unless the current system is reformed.

Social workers dealing with vulnerable adults need their workloads reviewed in the light of an ageing population and the growing number of dementia sufferers. A recent survey of social

workers has shown that almost two-thirds believed their departments were more poorly resourced than five years ago.

(See also:

[Social workers looking after adults fear a 'Granny P' tragedy](#)

Following a Government-funded poll on YouGov, the Government have launched a [campaign aimed at highlighting the damaging effect alcohol can have on sleeping habits](#). The YouGov found that 45 % of the 2,000 drinkers in the sample admitted experiencing fatigue the day after drinking over the recommended daily limits, while research conducted for the Know Your Limits campaign found some 58 % of those surveyed did not realise that drinking above the daily recommended guideless could cause sleep problems. In addition, the Government argues that statistics show more than 10 million adults in England regularly exceed these limits.

Commenting on the campaign, public health minister Gillian Merron said: 'Lots of people don't realise that drinking too much can disrupt your sleep, leave you dehydrated and unable to remember parts of your evening. In addition, drinking too much can affect your longer-term health, putting you at an increased risk of liver disease, stroke and cancer.'

E.Politix.com report that David Cameron has defend a [shadow minister who is providing advice to a private health](#) firm following a report in the Times newspaper claimed that Lord McColl, a shadow health minister, has a paid consultancy role for private healthcare company Endeavour Health.

Speaking to GMTV, the Conservative leader denied that this affected Tory support for the NHS, suggesting that the newspaper report was "rather overwritten".

"Lord McColl is currently on one of the mercy ships off Africa, carrying out free eye operations for people who otherwise couldn't afford them, and he is a public servant who dedicated a career to the NHS'.

Public Servant argues that the [plan to separate paying for care from providing it in the NHS isn't working](#), according to William Moyes, chairman of the foundation trust regulator Monitor.

At the same time, figures have shown that just 121 of 233 hospitals, mental health services and ambulance trusts have reached the position where they can become independent foundation trusts with their own budgets. Many of Britain's biggest teaching hospitals – including the ones in Bristol, Leicester and Nottingham, as well as St George's in Leeds, Barts, the Royal London and the Oxford Radcliffe – are said to be struggling to achieve this status and it could be as far away as 2015 before all NHS bodies can be foundation trusts.

Talking to the Financial Times, Moyes said that the recent Health Secretary and health minister were probably not as convinced as their predecessors that it was a good idea to separate purchasing from provision.

Kent Conservative MP Damien Green argues that he has obtained a 'small but significant victory for freedom' following the move to [remove his DNA profile](#) from the national database. Mr. Green argues that the Metropolitan Police had made the 'right decision' in removing his profile from the database, but called for the same right to be extended to all innocent people on the database, not just 'special treatment' for public figures.

Mr. Green, who is the shadow immigration minister was arrested in November last year as part of a Home Office leak inquiry. No charges were brought against him, but following the arrest, Mr. Green had his fingerprint taken, and under current rules, anyone arrested has their DNA stored, even if they are then cleared of the offence.

Writing in the Daily Telegraph, Mr. Green argues that 'the battle over our DNA records is part of a wider struggle to roll back the database state. As citizens of a free country, our personal information belongs to us, not the state.'

(See:

[Police face calls to scrap thousands of DNA files](#)
[Tory MP claims DNA Record Victory](#)

The number of deaths linked to the [hospital infections MRSA and C.difficile](#) has fallen for the first time, according to data from the Office for National Statistics The report states that the number of death certificates mentioning Meticillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) decreased to 1,593 in 2007 and then decreased further to 1,230 in 2008, a fall of 23 %. The number of death certificates in England and Wales mentioning Staphylococcus aureus (including those not specified as resistant) was 1,500 in 2008, a decrease of 27 % compared to 2007.

(See also:

[Reduction in deaths involving superbugs](#)

[Official number of superbug deaths falls 30 per cent in a year, but campaigners say figures don't give true toll](#)

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has found that 70% of families with disabled children are not accessing care or support.

[The local reports](#), which included ones on [Bexley](#) and [Brighton & Hove](#), gave poor ratings for areas such as organising respite care, accessing social worker services and getting homes adapted. The second year of research is underway, and reports on all 152 higher tier authorities will be available next year.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has published a guidance document that seeks to explain the law on child employment for local authorities, employers, parents and other stakeholders. "[Guidance on the Employment of Children](#)" is about the special rules which apply to the employment of children under the school leaving age, and includes some best practice advice to help those implementing it to deal with the sorts of practical questions they regularly face.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services at Brighton & Hove has written about their "Access Point" which is at the forefront of the latest developments in social care.

The Access Point is the 'front door' to social care-funded services, but can also signpost callers to other sources of help and advice. The service is contactable via phone, e-mail, the council website, and minicom, but face-to-face interviews can also be arranged. The main route is the phone, and the average time taken over the phone is 20 minutes to complete an assessment and arrange services.

Services arranged by the new Access Point are:

- home care up to a value of £75 a week
- daily living equipment and minor adaptations
- community meal services
- personal alarm service and Telecare
- sensory equipment and repairs
- information and advice on a wide range of council and community services
- signposting and help to access other services.

Ninety per cent of contacts at Access Point are resolved without needing further input, and the team handles 47% per cent of all social care assessments.

(See:

[Access to better Social Care](#)

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has published on its website details of all [mortality alerts](#) which have been reviewed and closed since its mortality outlier began in 2007.

The cases analysed include details of each alert, outlining, at which trust it was generated, when it was raised, the medical condition or procedure to which it relates, what action was taken, and the reasons why the alert was closed.

Richard Hamblin, director of intelligence at CQC, said: 'Modern NHS trusts should make monitoring outcomes for patients a top priority. Our mortality outlier programme pushes trusts to keep a close eye on outcomes, enabling them to drive improvement where necessary'.

(See also:

[A list of individual alerts for high mortality which are no longer being pursued: July 2007 – June 2009](#)

The Department for Children, Schools and Families has published ['Guidance on the Employment of Children'](#) which seeks to explain the law on child employment for local authorities, employers, parents and other stakeholders. The guidance includes some best practice advice to help those implementing it to deal with the sorts of practical questions they regularly face. This will enable employers to operate as prudently as possible within the legal framework to their benefit and to the benefit of the young people themselves.

This guidance is about the special rules which apply to the employment of children under the school leaving age. It does not cover general employment law.

Health Minister Ann Keen said:

'We want to make sure that cancer services in the England are world class and that NHS patients receive the best quality treatment.'

Health Minister Ann Keen has announced that experts have recommended that all hospitals with an A&E department should provide acute oncology services to ensure the correct treatment of emergency cancer patients and those who suffer severe side effects from chemotherapy. '*Chemotherapy services in England: ensuring quality and safety*' is part of new best practice to improve the quality and safety of chemotherapy published by the National Chemotherapy Advisory Group (NCAG).

The report sets out:-

- Recommendations that all hospitals with emergency departments should establish an acute oncology service that can quickly identify the symptoms and then treat appropriately patients who develop severe side effects from chemotherapy or undiagnosed cancer patients who present as emergencies.
- Further recommendations on issues around chemotherapy such as decision to treat, patient consent, prescribing and dispensing, and information for patients and carers.
- A new framework for commissioning, delivering and monitoring chemotherapy services.
- The importance of information and communication when treating chemotherapy patients.

(See:

[All hospitals with an emergency department asked to provide acute oncology services](#)

Victims of harassment will have greater protection following an extension of current powers that will allow courts to grant restraining orders following conviction for any offence.

The change, [which comes into effect on 30 September](#), will also allow courts to issue a restraining order where someone has been acquitted, if it's considered necessary to protect a named person from harassment in the future. Restraining orders are a powerful tool for protecting victims from harassment, including domestic abuse. Breaking the terms of a restraining order is a criminal offence punishable by up to five years in prison. Courts have

previously only been able to issue them in limited circumstances - where the defendant has been convicted of harassment or putting someone in fear of violence. The change of powers will improve the level of protection for all victims.

The British Medical Association has accused a council of "dragging its feet" over removing sunbeds from its leisure centres.

The BMA's Welsh arm said it had "serious concerns" over the conduct of Vale of Glamorgan Council, [which still has sunbeds](#) at three centres, even though the council's scrutiny committee recommended to cabinet in May that the tanning machines should be removed. BMA Welsh secretary Richard Lewis said: "Local authorities should be leading on health protection it's absurd that sunbeds are even there."

The genetics underpinning a smoker's risk of developing lung cancer have been further unpicked by UK scientists.

A report in the Cancer Research Journal has found three areas of DNA were found to be linked with lung cancer risk in smokers - two of them influencing the type of cancer which develops. This research, [reported by the BBC](#), supports previous studies which have suggested a family link, even after taking smoking into account. Smoking is responsible for nine out of 10 cases of lung cancer.

The research follows reports that [fewer smokers quit the habit in 2008/09](#) than they did in the year before. The NHS spent an extra £13m on helping people to quit - a 21% increase in resources – but the number of smokers giving up the habit fell by 4%.

The Home Office has announced that [victims of harassment](#) will have greater protection following an extension of current powers that will allow courts to grant restraining orders following conviction for any offence. The change, which comes into effect on 30 September, will also allow courts to issue a restraining order where someone has been acquitted, if it's considered necessary to protect a named person from harassment in the future. The Home Office argues that restraining orders are a powerful tool for protecting victims from harassment, the change of powers will improve the level of protection for all victims.

The announcement coincides with the publication of the '*National domestic violence delivery plan: annual progress report 2008-09*' which looks back on the action the Home Office have taken over the past year to ensure those who commit acts of violence against women are dealt with appropriately, and that victims receive the support they need.

The Department of Work and Pension (DWP) have published a research report '[Living with poverty: a review of the literature on children's and families' experiences of poverty](#)'. The review of qualitative research with low-income families and children presents a summary of evidence from the last ten years regarding the 'lived experience' of poverty.

The main aims of the review were:

- to provide a critical summary of recent research on child and family poverty.
- identify gaps in knowledge about the lives and experiences of children and families.
- to review evidence about childhood poverty, drawing together research that explores childhood poverty from children's perspectives and highlights their accounts of their lives and their experiences of living in poverty.
- to review evidence about family poverty: drawing together research with parents.
- in disadvantage, and exploring the challenges faced by families experiencing poverty in their everyday lives.

Forthcoming Parliamentary Business

The House of Commons and House of Lords are in recess until October 12.

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