

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Bulletin No. 36 / 4 September, 2009

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The Department of Health (DH) have launched ‘*Consultation on a review of Parental Order Regulations*’ on the Draft Human Fertilisation and Embryology (Parental Orders) Regulations.

The consultation is in 6 parts:

- The consultation document, which sets out the background to the consultation, and highlights changes made by the Draft Regulations. It also contains information about how to respond to the consultation.
- Annexes 1-3 show how the adoption legislation in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is modified by the Draft Regulations.
- Annex 4 sets out any amendments to other pieces of legislation necessary to ensure the Draft Regulations work as they should.
- Annex 5 is the draft impact assessment for the regulations.

The consultation and relevant documents are available on the [consultations](#) webpage of the DH website.

The consultation runs from 1 September 2009 until 23 November 2009.

The *Health Service Journal* report that the Department of Health (DH) has been told by the confidential McKinsey report that the NHS in England will need to slash its workforce by 137,000 if it is to achieve its planned £20bn savings by 2014. This would mean the NHS losing 10 % or 137,000 of workforce, and although the DH has said the report was ‘purely advice and does not constitute government policy’ it bears the department’s logo and has been disseminated among senior NHS managers.

The report argues that NHS hospitals in England are rife with waste and inefficiency, and up to £2.4bn could be saved if hospitals with the lowest levels of staff productivity pulled themselves up to nearer the average performance. The argument the report puts forward is that doctors and nurses in the worst 10 % of trusts deal with less than a fifth of the volume of patients that those in the best 10 % handle.

NHS Confederation policy director Nigel Edwards argues:

‘As well as staff productivity, the report identifies inefficiencies in the patient pathway. For example, it sets out how around 40 % of patients in a typical hospital do not need to be there at any one time. The biggest causes were delays in the patient receiving hospital tests or therapies, and a lack of more suitable care facilities in the patients’ own home or community.’

(See:

[McKinsey report in graphs](#)

[McKinsey cost-saving proposals focus on waste in acute sector](#)
[NHS Confederation on McKinsey report on future of NHS funding](#)

Funding from the British Heart Foundation and others organisations has enabled researchers at University College London to develop a new method using nanomagnets which targets cells to sites of injury in the body. The study ‘Magnetic tagging increases delivery of circulating progenitors in vascular injury’ published online in *The Journal of the American College of Cardiology: Cardiovascular Interventions* used an iron-containing clinical agent to ‘tag’ endothelial progenitor cells, a type of stem cell which could be important in repairing damaged areas of circulation.

(See:

[Exciting new method could help stem cells target damaged arteries](#)
[Nano-magnets guide stem cells to damaged tissue](#)

‘Doing Better for Children’ a report by the Organisation for Co-operation and Economic Development (OECD) argues that Governments should invest more money on children in the first six years of their lives to reduce social inequality and help all children, especially the most vulnerable, have happier lives. The report compares public spending and policies for children with key indicators of child-wellbeing in OECD countries, including education, health, housing, family incomes and quality of school life and argues that the average public spending by OECD countries up to age six accounts for only a quarter of all child spending, and that a better balance of spending between the ‘Dora the Explorer’ years of early childhood and the teenage ‘Facebook’ years would help improve the health, education and well-being of all children in the long term.

(See:

[United Kingdom Country Highlights OECD \(2009\), Doing Better for Children](#)
[Doing Better for Children: press releases](#)
[Spend early on children, says OECD](#)

A Patients’ Association report ‘[Patients not numbers, people not statistics](#)’ argues that there are a large number of NHS patients receiving substandard care.

(See also:

[Patients Association releases shocking accounts of NHS hospital care](#)
[The King's Fund statement in response to the Patients Association report 'Patients not numbers, people not statistics'](#)
[Patients Association receives overwhelming public response](#)

The House of Commons Library has published a Standard Note update ‘[The Decent Homes Standard: update](#)’ which offers an update on progress in achieving the standard since the original paper *Delivering the Decent Homes Standard: social landlords’ options and progress* was written in August 2003.

A report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) and funded by Age Concern and Help the Aged, ‘[The expenditure experience of older households](#)’ examines detailed trends in expenditure patterns between 1995 and 2007, with a particular focus on

the pensioner population. The report argues that because pensioners are not a homogeneous group, but differ widely in both their levels and patterns of spending, the survey looked not just at pensioners as a whole but also at pensioners according to age, income and household composition. The premise for this method of survey was that spending indicates household welfare in a way that other, often-used measures like incomes do not, and in particular, the report argues that spending is informative about long-run well-being whereas income is more about current, short-run living standards.

In addition, higher energy prices between 2004 and 2007 coincided with substantially higher fuel spending and lower fuel consumption for older households.

(See:

[*The expenditure experience of older households*](#)

[*Pensioners short-changed as they pay more money for less heat*](#)

The Department of Health (DOH) reports that a new survey from the *Know Your Limits* campaign indicates that this year, holiday drinkers in England drank an average eight alcoholic drinks every day during their summer holiday period.

The survey indicates that more than a quarter of holidaymakers (27%) admitted to the *Know Your Limits* campaign that they drank three times or more of their usual alcohol whilst away this summer, and also admitted to other alcoholic drinks like strong cocktails or shots each day.

The DOH argue that as a result of the survey, September is looking like the new January across England, with holidaymakers vowing to cut back on their return with:-

- one in five people (19%) surveyed in the ICM poll pledged to take two days off drinking a week.
- 16% planned to stop drinking altogether between Monday and Thursday.
- one in five people (22%) are generally going out less.
- 12% are having a completely dry month.

(See:

[*September is the new January*](#)

The Dept for Children, Schools and Families has launched a new national [social work recruitment campaign](#) which aims to recruit more than five thousand social workers for vulnerable children, adults and families.

A series of TV advertisements entitled “Help Give Them a Voice”, show how social workers change the lives of thousands of children and adults every day, by giving a voice to the most vulnerable in society.

See also

[LGiU response to government's social work recruitment drive](#)

A new report published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation looks at the changes to social policy since 1979 and the impact this has had – using three 'model lifetimes' for low, average and high earners to assess impact.

It also examines child and pensioner poverty under the systems of 1979, 1997 and 2008.

Key findings of the report, entitled [Comparing taxes and benefits in 1979, 1997 and 2008](#), include –

- Benefits for children were eroded between 1979 and 1997 but have become more generous since 1999. However, this increased generosity is targeted at low-income families.
- Pension policy has changed over time, with greater reliance on private pensions and erosion of both state and employer-based schemes
- Average-earning families saw very little difference in taxes and benefits over time between 1979, 1997 and 2008
- Higher-earning families were big gainers in 1997 and 2008 compared with 1979
- Low-income families fared worst overall. Particular losses between 1979 and 1997 have been reversed, but when indirect taxation is taken into account these recent gains are minimal.

A recent survey has indicated that almost half of all pregnant women are likely to [refuse the swine flu vaccination](#) when it becomes available suggesting there is widespread concern about its safety.

48% of pregnant women who responded said they probably or definitely would not have the jab if it is available. Only 6% said they definitely would and 22% said they probably would.

Pregnant women are one of the target groups for vaccination identified by experts advising the government – however, six pregnant women in the US died of swine flu complications between 15 April and 18 May.

Teachers are calling for the new code of conduct to be scrapped because they say it intrudes into their private lives and strips them of basic human rights. The code comes into force in October, and it requires teachers to uphold public trust and confidence in them out of school hours.

(See:

[Teachers campaign against Code of Conduct](#)

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation have published a report looking at poverty and how other countries have tackled it using human rights. The report, “[Poverty, Inequality and Human Rights](#)” covers:

- How human rights have been used to understand poverty
- How communities experiencing poverty use human rights to act against injustice, build alliances between disparate groups, and articulate their conditions and claims;
- The tools that communities and their allies use to hold the state accountable for its human rights obligations
- How human rights have been implemented in practice in anti-poverty work by governments and other organisations
- Lessons for integrating human rights and anti-poverty work in the UK.

A [four-page summary report](#) is also available.

A management consultant report has recommended cutting the NHS workforce by 10% over the next five years, and these cuts should be amongst clinical staff as well as administrators. The report from McKinsey & Co also recommended a recruitment freeze and a reduction in medical school places in order to save £20bn.

The Department of Health has said that these are just recommendations and that it felt that some services needed more staff rather than fewer.

(See:

[DH is told 137,000 NHS Posts must Go](#)

[NHS Workforce Cuts Plan Rejected](#)

[The NHS is Enormous, Expensive and Still Growing](#)

Medway Council has carried out an exercise to test its local swine flu anti-viral collection plans in the event of a second wave of infection. The exercise was carried out with NHS Medway and Medway Community Healthcare, and they claim that this is one of the first partnerships to have done so.

(See:

[Medway tests Swine Flu Preparations](#)

Secondary Schools will be required to provide healthy menus from this term, with junk food no longer available from vending machines or tuck shops, with things like burgers and sausages only available once per fortnight.

Under new rules, which were introduced on a voluntary basis in 2006, schools are forced to serve at least two portions of fruit and vegetables every day. Oily fish such as sardines - a renowned "brain food" - should be available at least once every three weeks and bread must be served daily. No more than two deep-fried foods, such as chips and batter-coated burgers and sausages, are available in a single week.

(See:

[School Ban on Fatty Food to beat Obesity](#)

90% of girls aged between 13 and 17 have had had an intimate relationship, an NSPCC survey has found, and one in six of these had been pressured into a sexual relationship. The survey also found that a third of girls had suffered sexual abuse and a quarter physical violence during the relationship, 20% of boys had also suffered physical violence.

(See:

['Many Girls' abused by Boyfriends](#)

[1 in 3 Teenage Girls tells of Sexual Abuse](#)

Research in the British Journal of General Practice finds that the problem of childhood obesity cannot just be tackled by front-line NHS staff and that primary care staff should be involved in spotting and treating overweight children. However, GPs, practice nurses, school nurses and health visitors often have more pressing problems

to deal with when they see children than their weight, so obesity may get overlooked; also, the causes of obesity are outside of their control.

(See:

[GPs struggle with Child Obesity](#)

The UK Fire Statistics have been released showing a fall of 14% in the total number of fires in England, and the number of deaths falling by 15% to 339. The statistics also show that the number of false alarms has also fallen. Best Value performance indicators for the Fire and Rescue Service have also been published by the DCMS. The tables, which cover the year 2007-08, show indicators for [Corporate Health](#) and [Fire Incidents](#).

Pupils who receive help from teaching assistants make less progress than classmates of similar ability, a government-funded study suggests.

The expansion of the school support workforce, which began in 2003, was also intended to raise quality, giving extra support to children with special educational needs.

The Institute of Education assessed the impact of this huge expansion in support staff in England and Wales since 2005 by studying 153 schools.

It said such staff tended to look after the pupils most in need, reducing their contact with the qualified teacher.

The government said teacher workloads and class behaviour had improved.

The Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project surveyed 20,000 teachers and analysed the help received by more than 8,000 pupils in 153 schools in 2005-6.

(See also: [Teaching Assistants Boost Teachers' Productivity but not Pupil's Progress](#)

[Teaching assistants don't boost pupils' progress, report finds](#)

Many parents want kitchens in England's state schools so children can be taught how to cook, a survey suggests.

This was top of a resources wish list for 63% of the 739 parents who took part in a PCP poll for the practical learning foundation Edge.

Almost as many wanted a business unit and computers in every classroom, while 45% chose a swimming pool, 25% a theatre and 19% a recording studio.

Edge sees the parental aspirations as seeking to narrow the difference in facilities between private and state schooling.

The Home Office have published [Tackling Youth Knife Crime: Practical advice for police](#)

This advice shares effective practice from the Tackling Knives Action Programme force areas, and is a useful resource for forces and partner agencies who, though not involved in TKAP, are working to understand their knife crime problem and develop interventions to reduce the harm caused by youth knife crime.

The Department of Health have produced ['Pandemic influenza toolkit for NHS ambulance services in England'](#). The toolkit is part of the Department of Health's (DH)

programme for improving and enhancing the preparedness within NHS ambulance services for managing pandemic influenza. The aim is to support ambulance trusts in the delivery of an operational response. The body of the toolkit provides a summary statement of individual topics and signposts to further information, websites and material published by DH.

The toolkit is available on the [publications pages](#) of the DH website.

The Department of Health (DH) have just issued new revised planning assumptions [‘Swine flu: UK planning assumptions’ in relation to the current A\(H1N1\) Swine Flu pandemic](#). The assumptions are intended to provide a common agreed basis for planning, across all public and private sector organisations.

These assumptions are revised, reasonable worst case scenarios for planning purposes, based on the latest scientific evidence available on the A(H1N1) virus so far. They are not predictions of how we expect the virus to behave. They support effective planning for every eventuality, and are appropriate for use until the end of the 2009/10 ‘seasonal period, estimated to be until Mid-May 2010. They supersede the planning assumptions published in July 2009.

The document is available on the [new publications webpage](#) of the DH website.

The Department of Health (DH) has published *‘Taskforce on the health aspects of violence against women and girls’* which reflects the Government’s aim to ensure that the NHS is fully engaged addressing violence against women and girls, taking into account its seriousness and the fact that it can have a devastating impact on victims

The Task-Force forms part of a cross-Government programme on violence against women and girls seeks to join up existing work across a number of departments. A Home Office consultation exercise carried out earlier in 2009, *‘Together We Can End Violence Against Women and Girls’*, looked at what more could be done to challenge attitudes to help women and girls feel safer.

The Taskforce and relevant documents are available on the [publications webpage](#) of the DH website.

Research undertaken by Bournemouth University (BU) nutrition academics has revealed that whilst UK prisoners are consuming a healthy balanced diet, hospital patients are leaving undernourished and hungry.

Academics from the Foodservice and Applied Nutrition Research Group, based within BU’s School of Services Management, have undertaken various studies into the food delivery and consumption process among inmates and patients from UK hospitals and prisons.

The separate studies published in the *Journal of Foodservice and Nutrition* reveals that despite prisons spending less per person on meals, people are far more likely to go hungry in an NHS hospital than in a prison.

The researchers believe hospital patients face barriers in getting good nutrition, including not receiving assistance with eating and nobody monitoring if they are well fed.

Professor John Edwards, Director of the Food Service and Applied Nutrition Group, said 'around 40% of patients going into hospital were already malnourished but this situation did not tend to improve while there'.

(See:

[Hungry in hospital, healthy in prison?](#)

[Patients more likely to go hungry than prisoners](#)

Following recent advice from the Government's scientific advisory body the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM), the [Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency \(MHRA\)](#) have announced new advice on over-the-counter (OTC) medicines containing codeine and dihydrocodeine (DHC) to minimise the risk of overuse and addiction.

The package of measures include clear and prominently positioned warnings on the label and patient information leaflet (PIL) about the risk of addiction, and the importance of not taking these medicines for longer than three days.

The revised guidance on the use of these products will focus on treating moderate pain not relieved by simple painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen, and there will also be updated controls on advertising to ensure the new warnings are clearly presented.

(See also:

[Pain drugs get addiction warning](#)

Researchers have discovered two powerful [new antibodies to HIV](#) that could be an Achilles heel on the virus. In work published in the periodical *Science*, the researchers will try to exploit the findings to initiate novel approaches to designing an AIDS vaccine.

"The findings themselves are an exciting advance toward the goal of an effective AIDS vaccine because now we've got a new, potentially better target on HIV to focus our efforts for vaccine design," said Wayne Koff, senior vice president of research and development at IAVI. "And having identified this one, we're set up to find more, which should further accelerate global efforts in AIDS vaccine development."

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(See also:

[Antibodies 'may aid HIV jab hunt'](#)

A new study claims that people with [large thighs over 60cm, or 23.6in in circumference](#) have a lower risk of heart disease and early death.

A team of researchers who studied 3,000 men and women in Denmark says the relationship remains even when body fat, smoking and blood cholesterol are taken into account.

Their report suggests that those with narrow thighs may not have enough muscle mass to deal with insulin properly, raising the risk of diabetes and, in turn, heart disease.

But in response to the study, published in the British Medical Journal, British Heart Foundation Senior Cardiac Nurse Judy O'Sullivan said: "There is insufficient evidence to

confirm that a low thigh circumference affects a person's risk of developing cardiovascular disease.

(See also:

[Large thighs 'may protect heart'](#)

New British Heart Foundation (BHF) research from Imperial College London could indicate why [vegetables are good for the heart](#) with findings that suggest that a chemical found in vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower, can boost a natural defence mechanism to protect arteries from disease. The researchers discovered that a normally-protective protein called Nrf2 is inactive in areas of arteries that are susceptible to disease, but found that treatment with a chemical found in brassicas can activate Nrf2 in these disease-prone regions.

Professor Peter Weissberg, Medical Director at the BHF, said: “These fascinating findings provide a possible mechanism by which eating vegetables protects against heart disease.

(See also:

[How greens may protect the heart](#)

The Royal Society of Radiographers (SOR) have criticised Tesco for offering vouchers for [health scans](#) through its Clubcard loyalty scheme, arguing that the promotion should be stopped as it is ‘inappropriate’ for retailer. The organisation says the CT scans involve a risk from exposure to radiation which is not made clear to Clubcard customers before they take up the offer. But Tesco says the firm that provides its service employs qualified staff and explains any risks to customers

The BBC argue that about one in every hundred people faces being diagnosed with [schizophrenia](#) at some stage in their life, but there are questions over the quality of the treatment on offer, and there is concern in the US that drug companies have been influencing psychiatrists over what anti-psychotic drugs to prescribe.

Dr Herbert Meltzer, who pioneered the use of clozapine in America, passionately denies such interference is the norm. But he was challenged by US medical journalist Robert Whitaker over the need for medication at all when the two debated on the BBC's World Today programme.

Bionet, a group of expert Chinese and European doctors, lawyers and bioethicists, argue that a clampdown on unproven and potentially unsafe [stem cell research](#).

Bionet, also says countries throughout the world must develop more effective regulation for this emerging science, and desperate patients are being subjected to a huge amount of hype when they travel abroad for treatments.

Professor Nicholas Rose, from the London School of Economics, who led the group, said: ‘the key is informed consent, and doctors should be able to tell the patient about the short-term and long-term prognosis and the things we don't know about the risks.’

Bionet's team had talked to physicians in China and Europe because China had now overtaken India as the place where pharmaceutical companies were carrying out most of their trials.

Forthcoming Parliamentary Business

The House of Commons and House of Lords are both on summer recess until Monday 12 October 2009

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