

May 2018

PSNC Briefing 031/18: Update on the Health and Care Landscape

This briefing is part of a series issued regularly by PSNC to inform pharmacy contractors and LPCs of developments in the wider health and care landscape beyond community pharmacy. These briefings contain useful background information to help you understand what is happening in the wider health and care environment which may impact on community pharmacy. They build on the Health & Care Review articles which are published on the PSNC website every week.

GMC gears up to support extra international doctors wanting to work in the UK

The General Medical Council (GMC) is [adapting](#) to meet increased demand in the number of non-European Union (EU) doctors applying to take the practical exam in order to work in the UK.

The GMC is adding additional test dates at weekends to support a healthy supply of doctors into UK practice. The GMC is expecting more than 5,000 doctors to take the exam this year.

The rising cost of medicines to the NHS: what's the story?

The King's Fund has published a [briefing](#) which examines total spends on medicines by the health service. The briefing also explores policies used to try to control growth in costs and the future choices likely to be faced by policymakers.

Key facts include:

- estimated total NHS spending on medicines in England has grown from £13 billion in 2010/11 to £17.4 billion in 2016/17 – an average growth of around 5% per year;
- much of the recent growth in medicines spending has been in the hospital sector, where estimated costs have grown at 12% a year on average since 2010/11;
- in primary care, spending growth is lower. Although the volume of prescription items increased by almost half in the decade to 2016, this was offset by a reduction of nearly a quarter in the average cost per prescription item; and
- without a new funding settlement for the NHS, policymakers are likely to face increasingly difficult choices.

Prevalence of beliefs about actual and mythical causes of cancer

Cancer Research UK has published the [findings](#) of a research piece it commissioned, published in *European Journal of Cancer*.

Researchers at University College London and the University of Leeds surveyed 1,330 people in England and found that more than 40% wrongly thought that stress (43%) and food additives (42%) caused cancer.

A third incorrectly believed that electromagnetic frequencies (35%) and eating genetically modified food (34%) were risk factors, while 19% thought microwave ovens and 15% said drinking from plastic bottles caused cancer despite a lack of good scientific evidence.

Among the proven causes of cancer, 88% of people correctly selected smoking, 80% picked passive smoking and 60% said sunburn.

The research paper concludes that awareness of actual and mythical cancer causes is poor in the general population. Only knowledge of established risk factors is associated with adherence to behavioural recommendations for reducing cancer risk.

Patient-centred care for older people with complex needs: Evaluation of a new care model in outer east London

The Nuffield Trust has published an [evaluation](#) of a 'one-stop' primary care service within three London boroughs: Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge, for older people with complex health care needs.

The care model, known as 'Health 1000' was dedicated to addressing the health and social care of patients with complex needs utilising a multidisciplinary team, focussing on prevention and early intervention. It was also supported by contributions from the third sector. The original plans were for a service that catered for 1000 patients, but fewer than half that number were registered over two-and-a-half years.

The evaluation suggest that primary care hubs dedicated to the care of older people with complex needs could have a positive impact on quality of care, and on the experiences of both patients and staff. However, there was no evidence that these benefits translated into reduced use of hospitals although this could have been due to the timescale and numbers of patients which could have been too soon to see any effect.

NHS action on sugar pays dividends as hospitals slash unhealthy food and drink sales

NHS England has provided an [update](#) ahead of the upcoming sugar tax and has reported a sharp decline in the sales of sugar snacks and drinks from hospitals and their outlets.

So far, 152 of the 232 NHS trusts have signed up to the scheme. Headline results show a decline in chocolate bar sales, increase in fruit sales and running healthy meal deals which include sandwiches under 400 calories.

Innovation and technology in the NHS

Launched at the NHS Confederation conference by Simon Stevens on 15th June 2017 and as part of NHS England's commitment to the [NHS Five Year Forward View](#) (5YFV), NHS England has developed the [Innovation and Technology Payment \(ITP\) 2018/19](#).

The aim of the ITP is to help deliver on the commitment detailed within the NHS 5YFV – creating the conditions and cultural change necessary for proven innovations to be adopted faster and more systematically through the NHS, and to deliver examples into practice for demonstrable patient and population benefit.

NHS England has identified successful innovation or technology themes through a competitive process and the four innovations on this year's Innovation and Technology Payment are:

- HeartFlow – advanced imaging software which creates a 3D model of the coronary arteries to rapidly diagnose patients with suspected coronary artery disease avoiding the need for invasive investigations;
- Plus Sutures – a new type of surgical antimicrobial suture pack that reduces the rate of infections such as MRSA;
- Endocuff Vision – a new type of 'bowel scope' that improves colorectal examination for patients undergoing bowel cancer tests; and
- SecurAcath – a device to secure catheters that reduces infection risk for patients with a peripherally inserted catheter reducing the time taken to care and treat dressing changes.

Additionally, in an effort to tackle the problem of missed hospital appointments, NHS England will support DrDoctor, a digital tool to help patients view, change and re-schedule appointments, to demonstrate its potential in a real-world setting.

National pledge to stop overmedication for people with a learning disability, autism or both

NHS England is asking more doctors and healthcare professionals to sign up to a [pledge](#) to stop the overmedication of people with a learning disability, autism or both.

The drive is to support the Government-backed campaign, Stopping Over Medication of People with a Learning Disability (STOMP) which targets NHS trusts, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and those in the independent sector. It is asking healthcare professionals to review and seek alternatives to prescribing psychotropic drug prescriptions.

The STOMP pledge was launched in June 2016 supported by a number of professional bodies including the Royal Colleges of Nursing, Psychiatrists and GPs, as well as the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, the British Psychological Society and the Challenging Behaviour Foundation (CBF).

So far, more than 60 providers supporting nearly 60,000 people have signed up to the pledge. NHS England now wants all healthcare professionals to commit to the STOMP pledge.

Healthier You: NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme fact sheet

NHS England has published a [factsheet](#) to provide more details on the [NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme](#).

The factsheet provides key stats of the programme, such as:

- there will be 100% coverage across England in 2018/19;
- 50% conversion rate from referral to initial assessment;
- 3.7kg average weight loss;
- 25% of patients enrolled on to the programme were from a Black or Minor Ethnic group, and 45% were under the age of 65; and
- 44% of patients enrolled on the programme are men – a much higher proportion than typically attend commercial weight loss programmes.

The Lord Darzi Review of Health and Care: Interim report

The Progressive Policy Think Tank has published an [interim report](#) on a review by Lord Darzi which examines the state of quality in health and care services on the NHS's 70th birthday. The review was launched in December 2017 and includes recommendations for future funding and reform.

The final report will be published in the lead up to the 70th anniversary and will set out a long-term funding and reform plan for health and care.

The five conclusions of the interim review are:

- the health and care system has done exceedingly well to maintain or increase quality in the context of austerity;
- the main sources of increased productivity are running out of road the system's ability to find other sources of revenue funding is increasingly limited;
- Governments must stop approaching the NHS and social care as a liability to be managed and instead look at it as an investment that delivers a return – good health is an asset; and
- money alone is not enough – a bold reform plan is needed if the health and care system is to be fit for the 21st century.

UK asthma death rates among worst in Europe

Asthma UK has published a new [analysis](#) for World Asthma Day which took place in April 2018. The analysis of Europe-wide figures from 2011 and 2015 shows that the UK has one of the worst asthma death rates in Europe, with the rate of people dying from an asthma attack increasing over the years.

- the rate of asthma deaths in the UK has increased by more than 20% in five years, with figures from 2015 showing 1,434 people died from an asthma attack; and
- the UK's average asthma death rate over five years is almost 50% higher than the average death rate in the EU;
- like the UK, Spain and France have both seen an increase in asthma death rates; and
- Germany is leading the way with declining asthma death rates with an 11% drop from 2011-2015.

Asthma UK urges the NHS to invest in better asthma frontline services – including better tests to diagnose people and access to new treatments for severe asthma – and for the Government to invest in research for an asthma cure. It also calls for healthcare professionals to follow asthma guidelines, and for those with asthma to get in touch if they need health advice.

Alcohol and mental health

The Centre for Mental Health has published a [report](#) in partnership with the Institute of Alcohol Studies which highlights that people who have difficulties with alcohol and mental health are still not getting the help and support they need.

The report is based on a survey and seminar session held with professionals working in mental health and/or alcohol services across the country. It finds that:

- co-morbidity is a barrier to treatment, and support for people with co-occurring alcohol and mental health problems is too often poor and fragmented;
- support for homeless people with complex needs is particularly poor; and
- lack of understanding and join-up between services, funding and workforce shortages, and stigma facing those with co-morbidities are major problems.

The report calls for concerted national leadership to improve the support offered to people with alcohol and mental health problems.

Adult drinking habits in Great Britain: 2017

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has published new [statistics](#) on adult (aged 16 years and over) drinking habits in Great Britain in 2017. The information is underpinned by the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, run by the ONS and includes 7,100 respondents.

Key facts include:

- in Great Britain, 57% of respondents aged in 2017 drank alcohol, which equates to 29.2 million people in the population.
- young people aged 16-24 years in Great Britain are less likely to drink than any other age group; when they do drink, consumption on their heaviest drinking day tends to be higher than other ages;
- 4% of respondents reported that they did not drink alcohol at all; and
- people working in managerial and professional occupations, in addition to the highest earners, were most likely to say they drank alcohol in the past week.

Statistics on alcohol

NHS Digital has published a comprehensive set of [statistics](#), building on those published by ONS and other already-published sources to present a range of information on alcohol use and misuse by adults and children in 2016/17.

Key facts include:

- in 2016/17, there were 337,000 estimated admissions where the main reason for admission to hospital was attributable to alcohol (1% lower than 2015/16 and 17% higher than 2006/07);
- the number of admissions rises with age up until 45-54 and then falls – 39% of patients were aged between 45 and 64;
- more men than women were admitted – 62% of the patients were male;
- almost 25% of admissions were for cancer; 22% were for unintentional injuries; and
- 79% of adults earning £40,000 or more a year drank alcohol in the previous week in 2017, compared to 58% of all adults.

Powerful patients & paperless systems report

The Centre for Policy Studies has published a report, by Alan Mak MP, which explores how the ‘fragmented’ nature of NHS digital services could be brought together on to one easy to use, trusted platform that conforms to standardised rules.

The report’s recommendations include:

- all NHS patient records to be fully digitised;
- new digital messaging system for all NHS doctors and nurses;
- build a new NHS app to provide patients with instant access to medical data and health services;
- an NHS Kitemark for approved apps;
- regional data innovation hubs to cover the whole population of England; and
- bringing in a hub and spoke model of digital specialisation.

Major challenges threaten future of cancer nursing, says Macmillan

Macmillan Cancer Support has published the [findings](#) of its census of specialist cancer nurses and support workers.

Key facts in the census include:

- the number of new cases per specialist cancer nurse is dramatically different across the country;
- a greater proportion of specialist cancer nurses being paid in lower pay bands than in 2014;
- higher vacancy rates in specialist cancer nurse and cancer support worker roles than the UK average for health and social work; and
- the proportion of specialist cancer nurses aged over 50 has increased.

Macmillan expresses concern that:

- variation in the number of new patients diagnosed each year per specialist nurse means that patients may not be getting access to badly-needed specialist care;
- a trend of highly trained specialists taking on increasingly complex caseloads for lower pay may be exacerbating recruitment and retention problems in the cancer nursing workforce; and
- the proportion of specialist cancer nurses aged 50 or over has increased since the last census in 2014, which highlights the importance of making sure plans are in place to make the workforce sustainable in the long term.

Tackling obesity – What the UK can learn from other countries

2020health has published its third [report](#) on obesity since 2014, which highlights that a strong and mandated central policy is still needed to support bold, holistic local action to challenge obesity. The report examines obesity strategies from around the world to conclude what the UK can learn.

Key facts include:

- compulsory national policies on school-based education, health and wellbeing can give greater strength and support to local action on obesity prevention;

- taxation, whether considered, planned or implemented, can encourage manufacturer reformulation of products to healthier options;
- raised health literacy can help improve public dietary habits; and
- community-based programmes for school-aged children, and their families are much more effective than interventions focused on school environments alone.

Hepatitis C in England and the UK

Public Health England (PHE) has published the [latest](#) Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) report, slide sets and infographics for England and the UK to outline national progress with the elimination of HCV as a major public health threat in England.

Key facts include:

- 3% fall in deaths from HCV-related end-stage liver disease and cancer between 2014/16;
- provisional data suggests that 9,440 people were treated in 2016/17; up 85% on pre-2015 levels; and
- needle/syringe provision was found to be suboptimal, with just less than one half (45% in 2016) of those surveyed reporting adequate provision for their needs.

New system launched to help measure and prevent medication errors

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has launched a [new system](#) to help the NHS monitor, learn from and prevent costly medication errors through linking prescribing data in primary care to hospital admissions.

The [series of indicators](#) will inform safer prescribing practice and has been launched following the recent publication of research which highlighted the impact of medication errors. The indicators are intended to help pharmacists, clinicians and patients to review prescribed medication and prevent avoidable harm.

The report of the Short Life Working Group on reducing medication related harm made a series of recommendations which included quantifying prescribing practice that has a higher risk of harm and is associated with hospital admission.

The indicators aim to:

- support local reviews of prescribing;
- minimise unnecessary prescribing;
- identify where alternative medicines or medicines that reduce the risk could be prescribed; and
- reduce the number of patients who are potentially at risk of harm from medicines and the number of hospital admissions associated with that risk.

Professionals registered with ePACT2 can access prescription level data. Other users should access the data using the medication safety dashboard. This is an open access service that aims to improve quality, patient outcomes and value from medicines use.

Jeremy Hunt orders urgent action on patient safety at independent hospitals

The Health and Social Care Secretary has written a [letter](#) to chief executives of leading independent healthcare providers ordering them to take urgent action to improve patient safety. The letter follows a Care Quality Commission (CQC) report on the sector which found that a third of independent hospitals were rated as 'requires improvement' due to examples of poor practice and unsafe care.

The letter contains a number of safety and quality issues which independent care providers are asked to co-operate on within two weeks, such as transparency, negligence costs, critical care and transfers to the NHS.

Transformational change in health and care: reports from the field

The King's Fund has published a [report](#) which offers insight on transformational change, from four selected sites recognised as successful transformation initiatives.

The report features case studies from London, Birmingham and Solihull, Northumbria and one from the Netherlands. The authors of the report interviewed 42 people who were involved in leading, supporting, delivering, receiving or witnessing the changes that informs the report.

Each case study describes the approach they followed to achieve transformational change, the challenges they faced, the opportunities, the need for transformational leadership and the collective focus required.

Spending on and availability of health care resources: how does the UK compare to other countries?

The King's Fund has published a [briefing](#) which examines how much the UK spends on health care in comparison to other countries, and how the NHS is utilising some of the key resources this spending pays for.

The briefing specifically looks at workforce, bed capacity, medical technology, medicines and funding.

Key facts in the briefing include:

- the UK has fewer doctors and nurses per head of population than almost all the other countries examined;
- the UK has fewer magnetic resonance imaging and computed tomography scanners in relation to its population than any of the other countries examined;
- only two countries had fewer hospital beds per head of population than the UK, while the UK also has fewer beds in residential care settings than comparator countries;
- the UK spends less on medicines than most of the other countries examined; a key reason for this is the success of initiatives to improve the value of expenditure on medicines, such as encouraging the use of generic drugs; and
- the NHS is under-resourced compared to other countries and lags a long way behind other high-performing health systems in many key areas of health care resources.

The 10-year strategy for the health and care workforce

The King's Fund has published a [report](#) based on a roundtable event it co-hosted with the Nuffield Trust and the Health Foundation to help inform and shape Health Education England's workforce strategy. The draft strategy consultation document, *Facing the facts, shaping the future*, was published in December 2017 and will be followed by the final strategy in summer 2018.

Key messages from the roundtable discussion include:

- there is more than the NHS being a good employer. Given the time it takes to train new staff, reducing the current number of people leaving the professionals, early retirements and staff turnover is likely to provide benefits to everyone;
- much of the social care workforce is low paid, unregistered and employed in small private sector organisations; and
- the future workforce is difficult to model as current models are continuously evolving, and it has to be thought through in terms of what staff to train in the future but also how continuing professional development and re-training can allow greater flexibility once people are trained.

RSPH and ukactive recognise exercise professionals in the wider public health workforce

The Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) has published a joint [report](#) with ukactive that focusses on how to enhance the exercise professional workforce and how it can play an enhanced role in supporting the public's health. The exercise professional workforce represents roles such as fitness instructors, group exercise instructors and personal

trainers working outside of sporting contexts and within the fitness industry. There are approximately 57,000 members in the UK workforce.

Key findings in the report include:

- the overwhelming majority (85%) of exercise professionals already talk to their clients about wider health and wellbeing issues beyond physical fitness;
- there is a strong appetite from professionals and the public alike for a greater public health role for the exercise professional workforce;
- the main barriers identified by professionals to this enhanced role are lack of strong links with local health professionals (66%), limited financial support for training (58%), and communication skills (56%); and
- there is some support among the public for the co-location of health services within fitness facilities, primarily smoking cessation services (51%) and GP drop-in services (53%).

Credible plan to sustain underfunded care sector needed this year

The Public Accounts Committee has published a [report](#) which warns that urgent action is required to reverse care work's poor public image and boost staff recruitment and retention.

The Committee has highlighted that the social care sector is underfunded, with the care workforce suffering from low pay, low esteem and high staff turnover. Additionally, the lack of regulation within the care sector workforce and the balance of regulation vs a market-based approach is not supporting the sector to provide the best care possible.

The UK's departure from the EU is causing uncertainty over workforce sustainability, particularly in areas more reliant on non-UK workers. There is an urgent need to reverse the poor public image that care work has to boost recruitment and retention across the care sector.

The Committee also outlined its concern that the focus on critical care needs only is contributing to growing levels of unmet need for people with moderate care needs.

DHSC has committed to addressing these issues through the health and workforce strategy that it is currently consulting upon, and the promised Green Paper on funding of care for older adults.

London Mayor plans junk food ad ban on public transport

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has revealed [plans](#) to impose a ban on junk food advertising on public transport, in a bid to tackle childhood obesity.

The plans, which are currently being consulted upon, are part of the Mayor's wider London Food strategy that aims to help Londoners make healthier food choices over the next ten years. The proposals include potentially seeing adverts for unhealthy food and drink that are high in fat, salt or sugar banned across the entire Transport for London network, including London Underground, Overground and the capital's buses and bus shelters.

The Mayor said the measures are designed to tackle the "ticking timebomb" of childhood obesity in the capital.

New polling highlights public priorities for health and care funding

NHS Clinical Commissioners (NHSCC) has published the [findings](#) of a poll, commissioned by NHS Providers, NHS CC, the Royal College of Physicians and National Voices ahead of a major debate to mark the NHS's 70th birthday. The poll was undertaken by telephone with a representative sample of 917 adults aged over 18 in England between 26th – 29th April 2018.

The findings suggest that emergency services and mental health care are the public's top priorities for any extra funding for health and care.

Key findings include:

- the number of respondents who believe that NHS performance will get 'much better' or 'better' has increased to 21%, up from 15% for the previous year;
- the number of respondents who believe that the NHS will get 'worse' or 'much worse' has fallen to 46%, down from 62% the previous year; and
- only 11% of respondents cited 'being treated close to my home' as a priority when receiving non-emergency care, which suggests that receiving a high quality of care is more important than the distance travelled to receive care.

Promoting health and preventing premature mortality in black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has published a [quality standard](#) which covers promoting health and preventing premature mortality among Black, Asian and other Minor Ethnic groups. It draws attention to specific areas of inequality and aims to support public authorities in considering their equality duty when designing, planning and delivering services.

The quality statements include that people from black, Asian and Minor Ethnic groups:

- have their views represented in setting priorities and designing local health and wellbeing programmes;
- are represented in peer and lay roles within local health and wellbeing programmes;
- at high risk of type 2 diabetes are referred to intensive lifestyle change programme;
- referred to a cardiac rehabilitation programme are given a choice of times and settings for sessions and are followed up if they do not attend;
- can access mental health services in a variety of community settings; and
- with a serious mental illness have a physical health assessment at least annually.

Short-staffed sexual health clinics turn people away

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) has launched a new [report](#) in which it is suggested that the public are being left unprotected due to staffing shortages at sexual health clinics.

The report brings together the results of the RCN survey with nurses working in sexual and reproductive health; the data is presented alongside evidence from various other stakeholders.

Key facts include:

- over five years, the number of 18-24 year olds being tested for chlamydia has fallen by almost half a million;
- recent figures show a higher level of positive diagnoses for chlamydia now at 128,000 cases per year and a 12% increase in syphilis diagnoses;
- over 600 nurses working in the field found services severely understaffed, with few registered nurses, an inadequate skill mix and little access to training; and
- nurses reported having to turn patients away, a lack of clinics and described low morale and a tick box culture.

The RCN makes four recommendations that focus on:

1. understanding where the education and training resources and provision are across England and where the gaps are;
2. working with other stakeholders to clarify the requirements and opportunities for nurses to specialise in sexual and reproductive health;
3. working with other stakeholders to develop quality standards for the development of online sexual and reproductive health; and
4. continuing to lobby on the impact of budgetary cuts to sexual health provision and wider public health services.

Mapping winter in the NHS

NHS Providers has published a [report](#) to highlight the scale of pressures faced by NHS trusts and front line staff through the toughest winter on record.

Key facts in the report include:

- the number of people coming to A&E over the winter period (between December 2017 and March 2018) rose to more than 5.8 million;
- 160,000 more patients were admitted, transferred or discharge within the four-hour target compared to the previous winter;
- A&E attendances over the year rose to nearly 24 million – equivalent to almost half the population in England;
- there were 1.52 million emergency admissions over the winter, an increase of 85,000 compared to the previous year; and
- the number delayed by more than 15 minutes (the official limit) in handing patients over from the ambulance to hospital was 600,000.

The report also calls for a new planning framework based on realistic demand projections, and a review of capacity right across the health and care system in good time for next winter.

A fork in the road: next steps for social care funding reform

The King's Fund has published a [paper](#) which pulls together new financial modelling, public perceptions work and policy analysis to identify the problems with adult social care in England. The paper outlines options for its reform and identifies the advantages, disadvantages, impact and consequences of each option.

The paper concludes that reforming the current system will be expensive, but that if reform is chosen, England is now at a clear 'fork in the road' between a better means-tested system and one that is more like the NHS; free at the point of use for those who need it.

Stress: are we coping?

The Mental Health Foundation has published a [report](#), based on a new survey undertaken in 2018, that looks at the prevalence of stress in the UK and its implications. It focusses on what we can do to manage and reduce stress and makes recommendations for the Government in creating a stress-free environment.

Key facts highlighted in the report include:

- 74% of people have at some point felt so stressed that they felt overwhelmed or unable to cope;
- 51% of adults who felt stressed reported feeling depressed and 61% reported feeling anxious; and
- of the adults who said they had felt stress at some point in their lives, 16% said they had self-harmed, and 32% said they had suicidal thoughts and feelings.

RCGP calls on government to facilitate social prescribing for all practices

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) has published a [report](#) which suggests that every GP surgery should be funded to have access to a dedicated social prescriber.

The report assesses NHS England's [Time for Care Programme](#) – specifically, its 10 High Impact Actions, which aim to cut workload in general practice.

Of the 10 High Impact Actions evaluated, the RCGP found that the recommendation to utilise social prescribing – the practice of referring patients to non-medical care – to be one of the most effective and beneficial for both GP teams and patients.

This has led to the RCGP's call for every practice to be equipped with access to a dedicated social prescriber to help patients find the right care.

Tooth decay in 5-year-olds continues to decline

PHE has published the oral health survey of five-year-olds 2017. The data shows that 23.3% of five-year-olds in England had decayed, missing or filled teeth in 2017, a decrease to 30.9% from 2008.

The report however identified that clear inequalities in oral health remain, with children in deprived areas more likely to be affected.

Other key facts include:

- there is almost a 20-fold difference in severity between the lower-tier local authorities (LAs);
- children from deprived backgrounds have higher levels of decay than those least deprived; prevalence of tooth decay among most deprived children is 33.7% and for the least deprived is 13.6%;
- children in particular ethnic groups had markedly higher levels of decay prevalence; among children from Eastern Europe the prevalence was 49.4%, compared to 19.6% for Black/black British; and
- while dental decay levels are reducing, and there are signs that inequalities are beginning to reduce, the inequalities gap remains unacceptably high.

12 million people to benefit from better joined up NHS and social care work

NHS England has [announced](#) the second wave of [Sustainability and Transformation Partnership](#) (STP) sites selected to become Integrated Care Systems.

The new sites are:

- Gloucestershire STP;
- North Cumbria;
- Suffolk and North East Essex; and
- West Yorkshire and Harrogate.

The four sites received a vote of confidence in strong local leadership, partnership working and ambitious plans to strengthen primary care and integrate services for the benefit of local communities.

Health matters: preventing Type 2 diabetes

PHE has published the latest edition of [Health Matters](#), this time focussing on preventing Type 2 diabetes, specifically on the [NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme](#). The resource highlights the scale of the problem, the national response to diabetes prevention, as well as lifestyle interventions and national policies.

£15 million boost for local mental health crisis services

New funding worth £15 million has been [announced](#) to create support services for people at risk of a mental health crisis.

The Beyond Places of Safety scheme will fund clinics, crisis cafes and other community services to prevent people from reaching crisis point and supporting those to do.

The funding will be allocated to 51 projects that will:

- integrate health and care support with other services such as housing advice, addiction services and counselling;
- improve links with local voluntary and community sector partners; and
- provide safe and secure spaces in the community for those experiencing distress.

It is hoped that the support offered to those at risk of a mental health crisis will help to relieve pressures on hospitals by reducing unnecessary A&E visits. The projects will also include measures to strengthen the long-term support available to those at risk of a mental health crisis and relapse prevention.

Emergency admissions in the NHS increase by almost half in a decade due to rise in sicker patients, new research shows

The Health Foundation has published the findings of new [research](#) looking at trends in emergency admissions over the past decade and reviews some of the interventions aimed at reducing harm.

Key findings include:

- one in three patients admitted to hospital in England as an emergency in 2015/16 had five or more health conditions, such as heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, dehydration, hip fracture or dementia. This is up from one in ten in 2006/07;
- the number of patients admitted urgently to hospital has increased by 42% over the past decade – an average of 3.2% per year;
- patients arriving at A&E are sicker than ever before, and more likely to need admission. This has grown for patients with multiple health conditions, as well as for older patients aged 85 or over, up by 58.9%; and
- hospitals are treating patients more quickly, with overnight stays for those with five or more conditions lasting 10.8 nights in 2015/16 compared with 15.8 days a decade previously. The number of these patients admitted to hospital but discharged on the same day have increased by 373% over the same period.

Parental alcohol and drug use: understanding the problem

PHE has published a [toolkit](#) for commissioners of drug and alcohol services, and children services to help identify problematic substance use and help commission appropriate services.

It has been developed to support LAs to:

- identify problematic parental alcohol and drug use as early as possible;
- ensure that the services they commission have sufficient capacity and resources to support parents and children affected by problem parental alcohol and drug use;
- identify and commission interventions to reduce harm and promote recovery for parents who misuse alcohol and drugs and also to reduce and prevent harm to their children; and
- address the effects of adverse childhood experiences and to safeguard children.

Air pollution: a tool to estimate healthcare costs

PHE has [published](#) a new report and cost tool to estimate the health and social care costs of air pollution in England, as part of the wider Government strategy to reduce air pollution. The tool is intended to be used by LAs to inform their policies to improve air quality.

Key facts highlighted include:

- health and social care costs of air pollution in England could reach £5.3 billion by 2035 unless action is taken; The costs are for diseases where there is a strong association with air pollution: coronary heart disease; stroke; lung cancer; and child asthma;
- when diseases with weaker evidence of association are also added, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes, low birth weight, lung cancer and dementia, the costs were £157 million in 2017 and could reach £18.6 billion by 2035; and
- there could be around 2.5 million new cases of all of the above diseases by 2035 if current air pollution levels persist.

First measure of industry progress to cut sugar unveiled

PHE has published the first [assessment](#) of progress on the sugar reduction programme by measuring how far the food industry has gone towards reducing the sugar children consume through everyday foods.

As part of the Government's programme to cut childhood obesity, the food industry has been challenged to reduce the amount of sugar by 20% in a range of products by 2020, with a 5% reduction in the first year. This includes retailers, manufacturers, restaurants, cafes and pub chains.

Eight food categories have been assessed; key findings include:

- there have been reductions in sugar levels across five categories;
- yoghurts and fromage frais, breakfast cereals, sweet spreads and sauces have all met or exceeded the initial 5% sugar reduction ambition; and
- sugar levels are generally the same across all sectors, however for the eating out of home sector, portion sizes are substantially larger – on average more than double – than those of retailers and manufacturers.

Under pressure: safely managing increased demand in emergency departments

The CQC has published a [report](#) which presents findings from inspections of emergency departments over winter 2017/18 and workshops held with frontline staff. Workshops were held with frontline clinicians to understand their experiences and the issues they face and what needs to change.

The report found specific concerns over delayed ambulance handovers; patients waiting too long before their first clinical assessment; and patients who needed urgent care were not always identified in a timely way. There were also concerns about many hospitals caring for patients in inappropriate places such as corridors.

The report recommends solutions which focus on:

- what can be done to help keep people well and reduce visits to emergency departments;
- what emergency departments can do to manage how patients flow through the hospital; and
- ways to help avoid unnecessary admissions and ensure early discharge.

Dementia – the true cost: Fixing the care crisis

The Alzheimer's Society has published the [findings](#) of an investigation it conducted on emergency admissions for people with dementia.

The investigation, which involved Freedom of Information requests to NHS Trusts in England and a survey of frontline paramedics, revealed a sharp rise in emergency admissions over the last five years – up 70% since 2012, with more than 50,000 avoidable emergency admissions of over-65s with dementia in the last year alone.

The report recommends key areas for the Government to urgently address:

- access – everyone with dementia to have access to timely, preventative and integrated care and support;
- quality – all health and social care workers to be provided the training and support they need to deliver quality dementia care; and
- cost – the cost of additional care charges for a health condition such as dementia to be covered by the state.

Health, ageing and support survey: 2017

Ipsos MORI has published the [findings](#) of research it conducted into the views of people after 50 and over on health, ageing and support for 2017. It was conducted on behalf of DHSC and is based on two surveys.

Key findings include:

- people aged 50 and over are slightly less positive about their health than a year ago, but still take their physical and mental health seriously;

- eating healthily is seen as important for both physical and mental health, though nearly half do not think a healthy lifestyle can prevent dementia;
- loneliness continues to be seen as a big problem for older people and most think society is not doing enough to prevent it; and
- concern about meeting the cost of care and support services has increased since last year. However, this has not translated into greater action and people are still not preparing substantially for the financial cost of care and support they might need.

Securing the future: funding health and social care to the 2030s

The Institute for Fiscal Studies, the Health Foundation and NHS Confederation have collaborated to produce a [report](#) examining NHS spend now and in the future.

Key facts highlighted in the report include:

- to meet funding pressures, an extra £95-124bn would need to be spent per year on health by 2033/34;
- if funding pressures are met through taxes, it is estimated that the average household would need to pay £1,200-2,000 more in tax in 2033/34;
- more tax is needed because in 2033/34:
 - there will be 4.4 million more people in the UK aged 65 and over;
 - more people will be living with a chronic disease and many with multiple conditions;
 - the cost of hospital drugs is likely to increase; and
 - the NHS will need to pay more to recruit and retain the staff it needs.

The growing problem of treatment waiting times

The Health Foundation and Nuffield Trust have published an [analysis](#) of treatment times in the NHS which has been published in QualityWatch.

Key findings include:

- in March 2018, only 87% of patients had a treatment waiting time of less than 18 weeks;
- the total waiting list has been growing since 2012, and we now have a waiting list that exceeds 4 million;
- the number of people waiting longer than 52 weeks to start treatment has been increasing since 2013. In March 2018, 2,755 people had been waiting for longer than a year, the highest number since July 2012; and
- by deferring the targets and removing the financial penalties, hospitals will have the opportunity to move away from managing the target to improving patient scheduling based on need.

£30 million of funding to tackle antimicrobial resistance

DHSC and the Department for International Development have [announced](#) that £30 million of funding will be committed to tackle antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

The funding will be delivered through four new projects as part of the Global AMR Innovation Fund. These projects are funded by UK aid and will primarily benefit people in low- and middle-income countries, where the burden of infection is greatest.

Media monitoring

On Tuesday 1st May 2018 the following stories were published:

- [The Guardian](#) features a look at the last decade of health and social care in the UK, reflecting on the 70th anniversary of the NHS.
- [iNews](#) reports that elderly people who exercise regularly are less likely to struggle to find words to express themselves. Researchers found that aerobic fitness levels of men and women in their late 60s and 70s was directly related to how often they become tongue tied.

On Wednesday 2nd May 2018 the following stories were published:

- [The Independent](#) and [The Telegraph](#) report that 90% of councils are stopping public health services due to budget cuts.
- [The BBC](#) reports that the British Homeopathic Association has won the right to have a judicial review of NHS England's decision to issue guidance to CCGs recommending that GPs no longer prescribe homeopathic treatments.
- [The Guardian](#) reports that Labour is urging minister to give doctors an exemption from the cap on visas for skilled workers to help tackle NHS shortages. A similar story accusing Theresa May of refusing to ease visa restrictions for overseas doctors appears in [The Times](#).

On Thursday 3rd May 2018 the following stories were published:

- A report in the British Medical Journal claims that the NHS is spending £23 million a year on prescribing bath emollients for children with eczema when the products have no clinical benefit. This was covered by the [Telegraph](#), [Mail](#) and [BBC](#).

On Tuesday 8th May 2018 the following stories were published:

- [The Times](#) reports that the RCGP want receptionists and admin staff to be trained in 'social prescribing' to ease the pressure on GPs. This would involve referring people to yoga, walking groups and debit advisers. Also covered by [The Telegraph](#).
- [The Sun](#) reports that 6,000 fingerprint scanners are to be given to GP practices and clinics to detect patients with irregular heart rhythms, hopefully saving £81 million in associated costs.

On Wednesday 9th May 2018 the following stories were published:

- [The Mail](#) and [BBC](#) report that NICE says there is not good enough evidence to recommend that people with an STI drink cranberry juice. NICE also says that it may be appropriate for patients who need antibiotics to have a 'back-up prescription' which should only be used if symptoms do not improve within 48 hours.
- Patients' ability to see the GP they want has declined by 27% over five years, despite government pledges to improve continuity of care. Evidence shows that people who see the same GP when they go to the surgery are more likely to have an ailment diagnosed early, take prescribed medications and access services to prevent ill health. Featured in [iNews](#), the [Telegraph](#), [Sun](#), [Times](#), [Mail](#) and [Guardian](#).

On Thursday 10th May 2018 the following stories were published:

- [The Mail](#) reports that NHS staff responding to 999 calls will assess patients using video before an ambulance is dispatched. The [BBC](#) says the new app is being trialled by air ambulance medics. Also covered by the [Telegraph](#) and [Times](#).
- [The Guardian](#) reports that the NHS will no longer have to share immigrants' data with the Home Office. There had been concerns from doctors' groups and health charities that the practice was a barrier to some people seeking medical help. Also covered by the [Independent](#), [Telegraph](#), [Times](#), [Mail](#), and the [BBC](#).
- A few papers contain opinion pieces following on from yesterday's news that patients are finding harder to see the same GP. [The Guardian](#) features a piece from the former chair of RCGP Clare Gerada, and [iNews](#) features one from their assistant editor for wellbeing.

On Friday 11th May 2018 the following stories were published:

- More than 1.5 million heart flutter patients should be on blood-thinning drugs to prevent stroke, study says. [The Telegraph](#) features research which has found that even patients whose atrial fibrillation appears to have improved have a significantly increased risk of stroke, and that doctors are too quick to take people off anticoagulants once symptoms have gone away. The new research suggests around 130,000 high-risk patients are not receiving the drugs they need.
- NHS staff will soon be able to sign up for extra shifts using an app to help cut agency costs, reports [The Mail](#). An app which allows NHS workers to book onto empty shifts could be rolled out across the country to reduce reliance on 'expensive agency staff'. Also featured in [ITV News](#).

- Immigrants working for the NHS should get special visa category after Brexit, says Jeremy Hunt. [The Mail](#) reports that the Health Secretary has said he is likely to lobby for a dedicated visa for immigrants working for the NHS, enabling them to stay in the UK.

On Saturday 12th, Sunday 13th and Monday 14th May 2018, the following stories were published:

- Government pledges £40 million brain cancer research fund in honour of Tessa Jowell, reports [iNews](#). In wake of her death due to brain cancer, Ministers pledged to fulfil requests made by the former Labour politician, including a commitment to a national rollout of a key brain cancer diagnosis test. Also featured in the [BBC](#) and [The Times](#).
- The number of children diagnosed with type-2 diabetes rockets by 25% in just four years, reports [The Mail](#).

On Tuesday 15th May 2018, the following stories were published:

- Wealthier children are at greater risk of dying from asthma, research suggests. Older adults in less affluent areas are at greater risk of dying from asthma, yet wealthier children also have a higher mortality rate than poorer peers according to a new study that highlights the wide variations in asthma care. Featured in [iNews](#), [The Times](#) and [The Mail](#).
- [The Express](#) features a warning from PHE after 440 cases of measles have been confirmed this year. The UK has been warned to watch out for measles symptoms after some European countries are in the midst of a large outbreak.

On Wednesday 16th May 2018, the following stories were published:

- According to Diabetes UK, a postcode lottery has emerged in the UK which has left the Flash Glucose Monitoring system only available to two in five areas in England. The charity argues that every area should have access for free on prescription. Featured in [iNews](#) and [The Guardian](#).
- More than 1,000 GPs have been lost since ministers set out plans to hire 5,000 more, official figures show. [The Times](#) reports that numbers have dropped, despite a pledge in 2015 to recruit 5,000 more GPs by 2020.
- Nearly a quarter of five-year olds starting primary school in England have tooth decay, figures reveal. [The Mail](#) reports that some 23.3% of five-year olds have dental decay, according to PHE data.

On Thursday 17th June 2018, the following stories were published:

- Patients' access to vital medicines is at risk unless the Government secures a post-Brexit deal for the pharmaceutical industry that ensures the closest possible regulatory alignment with the EU, MPs have said. The Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee published a report which said failure to secure a deal that ensures the minimum possible friction at borders will damage the UK's pharmaceutical sector. Featured in [The Independent](#).
- The Alzheimer's Society has warned that needless hospital admissions for dementia patients have risen by more than 70% over the last five years. They estimated there were up to 54,000 potentially avoidable emergency admissions in England last year. Reported in the [Telegraph](#), [iNews](#), [Independent](#), [Express](#), [Sun](#) and [BBC](#).
- [The Express](#) reports that the growing number of patients in care homes is putting an added strain on already stretched NHS resources. In England last year there were 22,089 occasions where private nursing home patients were taken to A&E, a rise of 26% in two years.
- Wealthier people are half as likely to get dementia because they have enough money for a stimulating cultural life, reports [The Times](#).

On Friday 18th June 2018, the following stories were published:

- The NHS has been cracking down on payments from overseas patients, reports [The Telegraph](#). NHS watchdogs are targeting 50 trusts who between them have failed to recover £44m owing to them from patients who are not entitled to free care. Also featured in [The Sun](#).

- Half a million doctors worldwide are sharing their knowledge on social media network MedShr to find answers for their patients. The network was set up by a London cardiologist in 2014, and doctors can post details of cases on it for other medics to offer answers. Featured in [The Times](#).
- Growing resistance to antifungal drugs ‘a global issue’, reports the [BBC](#). Scientists are warning that levels of resistance to treatments for fungal infections are growing, which could lead to more outbreaks of disease. Also featured in the [Independent](#), [iNews](#) and [Mail](#).

On Monday 21st May 2018, the following stories were published:

- Analysis by NHS Providers suggests that the NHS drive to treat patients at home rather than in hospital has ‘fallen flat’. An NHS spokesman has said the report ‘highlights the inescapable pressure on GPs, hospitals and community services from a growing, ageing population, which will have to be properly factored in to NHS funding decisions for the decade ahead’. Featured in the [Mail](#), [Guardian](#) and [BT News](#).
- NHS to divert ‘frequent flyers’ to A&E with coffee and counselling, reports [The Telegraph](#). ‘Frequent flyers’ to A&E departments are being kept away under a new scheme to offer a coffee and counselling to those coming to casualty for the wrong reasons. The initiative, which is set to be rolled out nationwide, comes amid soaring emergency admissions to hospitals, which have risen 50% in a decade. The scheme has been piloted in the North East, but NHS England now wants it rolled out the rest of the country in a bid to manage demand. Also featured in the [Express and Star](#) and [Mirror](#).
- An initiative to train 700 paramedics to prescribe drugs would help to take the pressure off GPs, reports [The Mirror](#). As many as seven out of ten patients seen by paramedics may need help but don’t necessarily need to be taken to hospital. These patients include elderly people with UTIs and asthma patients in need of steroid tablets.
- The critically ill should not be made to die away from home, reports [The Guardian](#). A report says that one in three people who die in hospital could spend their final days at home if the government introduces and adequately funds a modern community-based health and social care system.

On Tuesday 22nd May 2018, the following stories were published:

- Research published in the British Journal of General Practice has found that patients at risk of heart disease are failing to take statins because they worry GPs are being paid to hand them out. The research found a widely held belief among British patients that GPs have a tendency to over-prescribe statins, leading to suspicion over whether they personally needed the drugs. Reported in the [Telegraph](#), [Sun](#) and [Times](#).
- The Government is considering scrapping or changing parts of the 2012 Health and Social Care Act. The Lansley reforms brought in huge changes to the way the NHS in England is run, placing a stronger emphasis on competition and markets in the provision of care. This follows recent coverage of promises for more resources and a longer-term funding settlement for the health service. Featured in the [BBC](#).
- Bad lifestyles mean patients arrive at A&E sicker than a decade ago, reports [The Times](#). Almost one in three people admitted to hospital as an emergency has at least five illnesses, threatening NHS efforts to treat people closer to home.
- In a BBC documentary, Dr Chris van Tulleken revealed that children are taking three times more Calpol than 40 years ago. Calpol, and other paracetamol-based medicines, have been linked to asthma and kidney, liver and heart damage, although cases are fairly rare. Featured in [The Sun](#).

On Wednesday 23rd May 2018, the following stories were published:

- Elderly patients are being discharged from hospital with potentially lethal mix of drugs, reports [The Mail](#). Pensioners are often prescribed up to nine different treatments, which can cause severe side-effects when combined. Research from Brighton and Sussex Medical School and King’s College London found that a third of pensioners suffered medication harm as a result of the drugs they were given, but 52% of the complaints suffered could be prevented. Also featured in [The Sun](#).
- A judicial review by a group of campaigners challenging government health policy in England got under way at the High Court, reports the [BBC](#). The group, which includes leading members of campaign groups Doctors for the NHS and Keep Our NHS Public, are fighting the creation of accountable care organisations. These are

to act as partnership bodies incorporating hospitals, community services and councils, which campaigners say risks privatisation, although this is denied by ministers.

- [The Telegraph](#) features an opinion piece by Professor Dame Sally Davies, Chief Medical Officer for England, saying by 2050 one person will die every three seconds if we don't tackle antibiotic resistance. Currently it is estimated that around 5,000 people die a year in England because they develop infections that are resistant to antibiotics.
- One in eight people set to have type 2 diabetes by 2045, says study. Global rates for the disease will rise from 9% to 14% unless obesity levels are reduced, according to research funded by Novo Nordisk. Featured in the [Guardian](#), [Sun](#) and [Telegraph](#).

On Thursday 24th May 2018, the following stories were published:

- [The Mail](#) features a study published in The Lancet ranking healthcare providers in the world. The UK's NHS ranks 23rd out of 195 countries, three points below its position in 1990. The research also suggested that the quality of care varies substantially throughout the UK, with the South East of England performing better than the North East.
- Rising antidepressant prescriptions could be contributing to increasing obesity levels, study finds. All 12 most commonly prescribed antidepressants were associated with increased weight gain. Reported in [The Independent](#).

On Friday 25th May 2018, the following stories were published:

- [The Telegraph](#) features a piece on the cost of treatments and conditions that aren't available on the NHS. It includes eye tests, dental work, podiatry and some tests and scans.
- A study has found that graph cigarette-style health warnings can help dissuade people from buying sugary drinks. Featured in the [Guardian](#), [Independent](#), [Telegraph](#) and [Mirror](#).

If you have queries on this PSNC Briefing or you require more information please contact [Zainab Al-Kharsan, Service Development Pharmacist](#).