

March 2018

PSNC Briefing 019/18: 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.

Public satisfaction with GP services

The findings of the British Social Attitudes survey by the National Centre for Social Research have been analysed by the [King's Fund](#) and the [Nuffield Trust](#).

Since 1983, the survey has asked members of the public about their views on, and feelings towards, the NHS and health and care issues generally. The latest survey was carried out between July and October 2017 and asked a nationally representative sample of 3,004 adults in England, Scotland and Wales about their satisfaction with the NHS overall, and 1,002 people about their satisfaction with individual NHS and social care services.

Key findings include:

- public satisfaction with the NHS overall was 57% in 2017 – a 6% drop from the previous year. At the same time, dissatisfaction with the NHS overall increased by 7% to 29% – its highest level since 2007;
- older people were more satisfied than younger people: 64% of those aged 65 and over were satisfied with the NHS in 2017 compared to 55% of those aged 18 to 64. Between 2016 and 2017, satisfaction fell among all age groups;
- the four main reasons people gave for being satisfied with the NHS overall were: the quality of care, the fact that the NHS is free at the point of use, the attitudes and behaviour of NHS staff, and the range of services and treatments available; and
- the four main reasons that people gave for being dissatisfied with the NHS overall were: staff shortages, long waiting times, lack of funding, and Government reforms.

Research reveals levels of inappropriate prescriptions in England

Public Health England (PHE) has resourced a [research paper](#) which looks at inappropriate antibiotic prescribing and poor diagnostic coding in English primary care. The research found that at least 20% of all antibiotics prescribed are inappropriate and implies that antibiotic prescribing nationally should be reduced by 10% by 2020, in accordance with the national ambition to cut levels of inappropriate prescribing in half.

According to expert opinion, for most conditions higher proportions of GP consultations resulted in prescriptions for antibiotics than appropriate.

The research identified that better diagnostic coding, more precise prescribing guidelines, and a deeper understanding of appropriate long-term uses of antibiotics would allow identification of further reduction potentials.

Health Matters: Community-centred approaches for health and wellbeing

PHE's latest edition of [Health Matters](#) focusses on community-centred approaches for health and wellbeing. The article discusses why communities matter, how being connected is important for health, and building social capital with community-centred approaches.

New technology supports new mums to breastfeed

PHE has made available, via its Start4Life programme, the [Breastfeeding Friend](#) to encourage parents to adopt healthy behaviours and encourage breastfeeding. Evidence shows the right support helps mothers to breastfeed for longer. The Breastfeeding Friend is available for free on a range of platforms such as Facebook Messenger, and will now also be available as a skill for Amazon Alexa's voice services.

Mothers can ask Alexa a variety of questions about breastfeeding and the answers will be provided tailored to the age of the baby.

A survey commissioned by PHE of 1,000 mothers of young children showed that:

- 31% of mothers felt embarrassed about asking for help with breastfeeding from healthcare professionals;
- 64% felt that access to 24 hours a day, seven days a week breastfeeding support would make new mothers:
 - more likely to have a positive experience of breastfeeding;
 - more likely to decide to try breastfeeding; and
 - breastfeed for longer.

Deaths associated with neurological conditions

PHE has published new [resources](#) relating to deaths associated with neurological conditions in England during the period of 2001 to 2014.

They are written for those commissioning or providing end of life care to help them make sure local services meet the needs of people dying with neurological conditions. Conditions covered include epilepsy, multiple sclerosis and parkinsonism.

The resources contain information on:

- the numbers and rates of deaths associated with neurological conditions and their recent trends;
- the demographic characteristics of people dying with neurological conditions;
- the underlying cause of death and association with the broad disease groups; and
- the place of death.

Public health transformation five years on

The Local Government Association (LGA) has published its annual [report](#) to showcase the wide range of ways in which public health is transforming how it operates. The report notes that we are seeing significant changes in the understanding of public health teams of the potential breadth and depth of their reach in tackling the social determinants of health.

The report features eight case studies with a number of themes and messages such as tackling national priorities, prevention, digital technology and the recommissioning of services.

A matter of justice: Local government's role in tackling health inequalities

The LGA has published a new [report](#) which focuses on how social and economic factors lead to long-term ill health and premature death for the most deprived.

Key messages in the report include:

- health inequalities exist both between and within local authority (LA) areas, with almost 20 extra years of healthy life enjoyed by those in the longest-lived areas compared with those in the shortest-lived areas;
- people's life chances and their likelihood of living a long and healthy life are determined in their very early years but are affected at all stages throughout their life. Therefore, LAs need to take a 'lifecourse' approach to reducing health inequalities, influencing for the better the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age;
- within local government, public health is not just part of the remit of the public health team: almost every local government function has an impact on health; and
- at a time of major cuts in LA services, councils need to take a strategic, targeted approach, understanding the health impact of all their activities and making a commitment to 'health in all policies'. Reducing health inequalities makes sense at a pragmatic as well as a moral level because it can prevent people becoming and remaining ill and reduce the associated costs to local government, the NHS and the rest of the Government.

The reports helps readers understand health inequalities, who experiences them, and local government's strategic role and how it can be maximised.

Local government guide to healthy ageing

A new [report](#) has been published by the LGA which highlights the issues faced by the health and care system as a result of increased life expectancy and poor health.

The report touches on healthy behaviours relating to biological, behavioural and psychosocial processes through a life course approach, and features eight case studies on how LAs have tackled various issues relating to ageing.

Operational update from the NHS National Emergency Pressures Panel

NHS England has published an [update](#) from the meeting of the National Emergency Pressures Panel. The panel noted after stabilising A&E performance in January the NHS has been confronted with persistently high flu hospitalisations, a renewed spike in norovirus and prolonged cold weather which drives up hospital admissions.

The panel formally recorded their thanks for the hard work of all colleagues and noted the winter plans were having an impact in the face of the most challenging circumstances for several years.

As a result of the increased pressures, the panel is urging the public to use the NHS responsibly and access the services most appropriate to their needs.

Tackling multiple unhealthy risk factors: emerging lessons from practice

A new [report](#) on unhealthy behaviours has been published by the King's Fund on using innovative ways to address multiple unhealthy risk factors in populations. It contains eight case studies from LAs and the NHS on examples where behaviour change services address multiple unhealthy behaviours together to reflect the reality of people's lives.

The report makes recommendations on how services can develop and share evidence, and for how the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and PHE can support further innovation in such services.

Key lessons have been drawn for services that want to focus on tackling multiple unhealthy behaviours:

- target individuals who may have a particular risk of multiple risk factors using evidence that is available on who those people might be in a local area;
- approaches to behaviour change should ensure that the social factors behind accruing multiple risk factors are taken into account;

- unhealthy behaviours do not respect organisational boundaries, and some of the best partnerships on addressing multiple risk factors occur when LAs and the NHS set up formal referral routes between them; and
- the academic evidence on how best to tackle multiple unhealthy behaviours remains weak.

Commissioner perspectives on working with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector

The King's Fund has conducted [research](#) that was commissioned by DHSC which explores how and why Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and LAs chose to engage with the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector.

The research sets out the methodology that was used and presents findings on factors that underpin the adoption of different approaches and how commissioners' perceptions of their own strategic role, as well as their views on what role the VCSE sector plays in the local area, appear to exert a strong influence on commissioning decisions.

The report summarises the findings:

- there is a wide variation in commissioning practice;
- the primary drivers for choosing a commissioning approach were local, not national;
- successful co-production takes skill, time, confidence and mature relationships built on trust; and
- changes to the commissioning landscape may provide more challenges for successful co-production.

RCGP calls for an end to referral management centres that 'prioritise cost-savings over patient care'

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) has published a new report, [Quality patient referrals: Right service, right time](#), which considers the context in which referral management and support initiatives are set up, as well as the evidence for and against these models.

It is acknowledged in the report that referral management centres are judged to be successful by those involved in running and commissioning them, but the RCGP is concerned that some risk patients' safety as clinical decisions are often made in the absence of the patient and without full clinical information.

RCGP recommends in the report that referral management centres must demonstrate that they are safe for patients and cost effective to the whole NHS and suggest that systems of "referral support" have been demonstrated to be more effective in improving the quality and appropriateness of GP referrals.

Report on geographical inequalities in breast cancer

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Breast Cancer has published the final [report](#) of its inquiry into geographical inequalities in breast cancer diagnosis, treatment and care across England.

The report found that whilst overall outcomes for breast cancer patients are good and have improved over recent years, breast cancer treatment, care and support varies across the country. Furthermore, based on where they live in England, a woman with breast cancer may be:

- more than twice as likely to die from breast cancer under the age of 75 than a woman treated in a different area; and
- a third less likely to have attended breast cancer screening in the last three years compared to a woman living in another part of the country.

The key recommendations from the report outline that:

1. national and local workforce planning is essential;

2. new NHS structures need to improve the consistency, transparency and accountability of cancer services; and
3. effective collection and use of data will drive service improvement.

Reducing emergency admissions

The National Audit Office (NAO) has published a [report](#) which examines progress made by DHSC, NHS England, NHS Improvement and other stakeholders in reducing the impact of emergency admissions on acute hospitals.

The report sets out trends in emergency admissions and explains NHS England's and partners' responses to increasing emergency admissions and associated challenges.

Key findings include:

- overall emergency admissions continue to increase each year. Emergency admissions have grown 9.3% from 2013/14;
- older people make up more than half of the growth in emergency admissions between 2013/14 and 2016/17; and
- the number of bed days used by people admitted in an emergency admission has increased from 32.41 million in 2013/14 to 33.59 million in 2016/17.

The NAO also makes several recommendations in the report aimed at specific organisations but states that all organisations need to work together more effectively.

The report concludes that the NHS still has too many avoidable admissions and too much unexplained variation and that the challenge of managing emergency admissions is far from being under control.

Plans to cut excess calorie consumption unveiled

PHE has announced [new measures](#) to help reduce people's excessive calorie intake by reducing 20% of calories in popular foods by 2024 as part of a broader Government strategy to tackle childhood and adult obesity. The package includes:

- new evidence highlighting overweight or obese boys and girls consume up to 500 and 290 calories too many each day respectively;
- a challenge to the food industry to reduce calories in products consumed by families by 20% by 2024; and
- the launch of the latest [One You campaign](#), encouraging adults to consume 400 calories at breakfast, and 600 for lunch and dinner; this comes as adults consume 200 to 300 calories in excess each day.

PHE has [published new evidence](#) which sets out details on children's calorie consumption and the calorie reduction programme.

The next step in the programme involves engagement with the whole food industry such as retailers, manufacturers, major restaurant, café, takeaway, and delivery companies, and health and charity sectors, to develop category guidelines. These will be published in mid-2019.

PHE publishes latest data on nation's diet

PHE has published new [data](#) relating to the nation's diet based on figures from the latest National Diet and Nutrition Survey collected from 2014 to 2016.

Key facts include:

- sugar makes up 13.5% of 4 to 10-year-olds, and 14.1% of teenagers' (11- to 18-year-olds) daily calorie intake respectively; the official recommendation is to limit sugar to no more than 5%;

- average saturated fat intake for adults (19 to 64-year olds) is 12.5% of daily calorie intake, above the 11% recommended maximum; and
- only 31% of adults, 32% of 65- to 74-year-olds and 8% of teenagers meet the 5 A Day recommendation for fruit and vegetables.

The data underscores PHE's call for the population to follow a healthy balanced diet, based on the [Eatwell Guide](#), which includes eating at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables per day, increasing consumption of oily fish and fibre and limiting the amount of food high in saturated fat, sugar and salt.

Four in 10 smokers incorrectly think nicotine causes cancer

A new [report](#) by PHE highlights that public misunderstanding of the harmfulness of nicotine-containing products may be linked to inaccurate and confused perception of the risks of nicotine. Over 58% of smokers still try to quit without using an aid and going 'cold turkey' despite this being the least effective way.

Key facts highlighted include:

- 40% of smokers and ex-smokers incorrectly think that nicotine in cigarettes is the cause of most of the smoking-related cancer;
- understanding of the harms of nicotine among the general population is similarly poor:
 - only 7.5% thought that none of a very small part of the risk of smoking comes from nicotine;
 - 14% thought that it was nearly all the risk; and
 - almost a quarter (24.2%) of the population didn't know.

TB in England: annual report

PHE has published its annual [report](#) on tuberculosis (TB) to present detailed data on TB case notifications made to the enhanced TB surveillance system.

Key facts include:

- in 2016, there were 5,664 TB cases notified in England, down from 5,727 in 2015;
- following a sustained annual decline of at least 10% in the number of TB cases since 2012, the decline slowed to 1% in 2016; and
- as in previous years, the main burden of disease was concentrated in large urban areas with London PHE Centre accounting for the highest proportion of cases in England.

Flagship NHS Type 2 Diabetes Prevention Programme exceeds expectations

NHS England has published new [data](#) relating to early findings on the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme.

Key facts include:

- in the last 21 months of roll-out, more than 154,000 people have been referred, with around 66,000 people taking up places;
- just under half of those signing up are men – a much higher proportion than typically attend weight loss programmes, while roughly a quarter are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities; and
- so far, over 50% of people have completed the scheme after attending at least eight support sessions over a nine-month period – losing an average of 3.3kg.

Chief nurse announces major new recruitment and retention campaign to coincide with 70th anniversary of NHS

NHS England's Chief Nurse has announced [plans](#) on a new recruitment and retention campaign for the nursing profession to highlight the contribution of nurses and midwives in the NHS now and over the last seven decades. It

will also look at the wide-ranging career opportunities in the 21st century NHS with the hope of recruiting and retaining more nurses and midwives.

NHS 'one stop shop' for prostate cancer means faster and more accurate diagnosis

NHS England is [undertaking](#) a new scanning and diagnosis method for suspected prostate cancer to reduce mortality rates in the same way that has reduced breast cancer rates by 10%.

The usual process is an MRI scan followed by a biopsy where around a dozen samples may have to be taken with a needle through the rectum, in order to locate suspected growths on the prostate.

Under the new 'rapid pathway' approach, which is being developed in three hospitals across West London, men have a scan, get their results and can have any necessary biopsy in one day, rather than multiple outpatient visits over four to six weeks.

This new approach is being piloted at Charing Cross Hospital, Epsom Hospital and Queen Mary's Hospital in Roehampton.

NHS England publishes latest NHS staff survey results

NHS England has published [findings](#) from the 2017 NHS Staff Survey which was carried out in the run up to and during the NHS' pressurised winter between September and December 2017 involving 485,000 staff responses across 309 organisations.

Key facts include:

- 81% are satisfied with the quality of care they give to patients and nine out of 10 staff feel their organisation takes positive action on health and well-being;
- 15% report that they have experienced physical violence from patients, relatives or members of the public;
- the number satisfied with their pay fell to 31% down 6% on 2016; and
- 8% of staff say they have experienced discrimination from colleagues.

International comparisons of health and wellbeing in early childhood

The Nuffield Trust has published a new [report](#) which presents data on health and wellbeing for early childhood in the UK and 14 comparable countries. The report compares child health indicators between countries and recognises the influence of a child's early development on their future health and quality of life.

The various indicators include breastfeeding, obesity, vaccination and immunisation as well as social determinants of health.

Key facts include:

- the UK life expectancy for a boy is broadly similar to most European comparators however a girl can expect to live to almost 83 years, the lowest of all European comparators;
- the UK has one of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the world;
- the UK has considerably more overweight or obese children and young people than the average among high-income countries, for both boys and girls;
- vaccine uptake in the UK generally compares well with other countries; and
- rates of stillbirths, neonatal, infant and child death have seen a decline over the past 20 years in the UK, as they have across developed countries in general.

Likelihood of smoking four times higher in England's most deprived areas than least deprived

The Office for National Statistics has published an [article](#) which shows that people living in the most deprived areas of England were more than four times more likely to smoke in 2016 than those living in the least deprived areas. The analysis highlights a clear link between smoking and inequality published to coincide with No Smoking Day.

Other facts highlighted include:

- people living in rented accommodation were more than three times more likely to smoke than those who weren't renting;
- people in routine and manual jobs were three times more likely to smoke than those in managerial and professional jobs; and
- A person was also more likely to smoke if they reported having no qualifications, receiving benefits or having a health problem which severely limited their activity.

Quarterly performance of the NHS provider sector: quarter 3 2017/18

NHS Improvement has published a [report](#) which looks at the performance of the NHS provider sector for the month ended 31st December 2017.

Key facts include:

- performance against the four-hour A&E standard was 89.5% at the end of December, similar to performance for the same period last year which was 89.6%;
- rising demand and high levels of bed occupancy have affected providers' ability to admit patients who require planned care;
- agency costs have continued to decrease significantly and despite an increase in bank staff – to cope with increased demand and vacancies; and
- providers employ 1.1 million whole time equivalent staff but have 100,000 vacancies.

Bite Size: Breaking down the challenge of inner-city childhood obesity

Guy's & St Thomas' Charity has released a new [report](#) which brings together evidence on behaviour change and the experiences of families living in inner-city London. The report explores how the characteristics of an inner-city setting contribute to the behavioural drivers of childhood obesity and focuses on three key characteristics of these settings: deprivation, diversity and urbanisation.

Key facts include:

- London has the highest rate of childhood obesity of any peer global city;
- in the boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark in South London, there are exceptionally high pockets of obesity; and
- focussing on bringing the high rates in the poorest areas in line with the richest would address the deprivation gap. At a ward level, this could mean preventing around 20 children per year group from becoming obese.

Financial sustainability of LAs 2018

The NAO has published a [report](#) which reviews LA developments and examines whether the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, and others, understand the impact of funding reductions on the financial and service sustainability of LAs.

Key findings include:

- Government funding for LAs has fallen by an estimated 49.1% in real terms from 2010/11 to 2017/18;
- alongside reductions in funding, LAs have had to deal with growth in demand for key services, as well as absorbing other cost pressures;
- LAs now spend less on services, and their spending is more concentrated on social care; and

- LAs have tried to protect front-line services in their savings plans; while this has been successful in some areas, there are signs that services have been reduced in others.

NHS reality check: Update 2018

The Royal College of Physicians has published a [report](#) which features accounts of the experiences of over 1,500 doctors working in the NHS in delivering care in the UK health service. The key finding for the 2018 update was that conditions had got worse and NHS staff, who have benefited from some of the best medical education in the world, were not able to provide the standard of care they have been trained to deliver.

Key findings include:

- 64% of doctors believe that patient safety has deteriorated over the past year – 10% higher than last year;
- 93% experienced staff shortages across the team – 9% higher than last year;
- 47% cite lower quality care over the past year – 10% higher than last year; and
- 80% are worried about the ability of their service to deliver safe patient care in the next 12 months – 6% higher than last year.

The report also makes some recommendations for reducing pressure on doctors and retaining doctors in the NHS.

National action required to ensure local services work together to support children and young people's mental health needs

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has published a [report](#) which looks at mental health services for children and young people. The findings indicate that too many children find themselves at “crisis point” because health care, education and other public services are not working together as effectively as they could to protect and support their best interest.

The report finds that although Government interventions are welcome, the pace of delivery must be accelerated to achieve the required scale of change.

It also calls on the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to use the inter-ministerial group on mental health to guarantee greater collaboration across Government departments in how their policies prioritise the mental health needs and wellbeing of children and young people in England.

It also makes a series of recommendations for national bodies, Sustainability and Transformation Partnership leaders, commissioners, and LAs to work together to support and care for children and young people with mental health needs.

New research for nutrition and hydration week 2018

The British Specialist Nutrition Association (BSNA) has published new [research](#) for [Nutrition and Hydration Week](#) which finds that more than half of hospital trusts in England are significantly under-reporting malnutrition rates.

Recommendations from the BSNA include:

- introduction of a new comprehensive jointly developed and delivered clinical care pathway, which would initially focus on at-risk groups, such as the frail elderly; and
- introduction of incentives, such as a Quality and Outcomes Framework or its equivalent for malnutrition, could transform how malnutrition is identified, recorded and managed.

NHS treatment of private patients: the impact on NHS finances and NHS patient care

The Centre for Health and the Public Interest (CHPI) has published a [report](#) which looks at the treatment of private patients in NHS hospital trusts based upon official sources, Freedom of Information requests to all 153 acute hospital

trusts, and interviews with hospital staff. It finds that while there has not been a significant growth in private patient activity, the squeeze on NHS funding could lead to private treatment becoming more commonplace which could impact on the availability of care for NHS patients.

Key facts include:

- there has only been a small increase in the total income generated by the NHS from treating private patients since 2012 – from £511 million in 2012/13 to £596 million in 2015/16;
- the NHS has set aside 1,142 beds for private patients, while a further 150 NHS beds are estimated to be occupied by private patients at any one time;
- some hospitals have no agreed procedure for setting prices, while others negotiate prices with private insurance companies. This leads to wide variations in the prices charged private patients and big differences between these prices and the national tariff paid by NHS commissioners for NHS patients; and
- ten private patient units – mainly based in London NHS hospitals – account for nearly 60% of the £596 million generated by the NHS from the treatment of private patients.

NHS mandate 2018 to 2019

DHSC has published its [mandate](#) for NHS England which sets out the Government's overall objectives and budget for NHS England until 2020. The mandate also provides information on how NHS England's performance will be assessed.

NHS England's seven objectives are:

1. Through better commissioning, improve local and national health outcomes, and reduce health inequalities;
2. To help create the safest, highest quality health and care service;
3. To balance the NHS budget and improve efficiency and productivity;
4. To lead a step change in the NHS in preventing ill health and supporting people to live healthier lives;
5. To maintain and improve performance against core standards;
6. To improve out-of-hospital care; and
7. To support research, innovation and growth and to support the Government's implementation of EU Exit in regards to health and care.

NHS England's total revenue budget for 2018/19 is £114,269 million.

PHE remit letter: 2018 to 2019

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health and Primary Care, Steve Brine, has written a [letter](#) to PHE to set out the Government's expectation of PHE and PHE's priorities for 2018/19.

PHE's role will continue to evolve as the Government takes forward changes to future local government public health funding arrangements, as greater integration between the NHS, social care and public health is achieved, and as devolution deals develop.

DHSC has commissioned PHE to review the scale and distribution of prescription drug dependent and the optimal means of reducing it.

Public health commissioning in the NHS 2018 to 2019

DHSC has published a briefing to set out the [NHS public health functions agreement](#), under which the NHS is delegated responsibility for certain public health services. Services currently commissioned in this way are national immunisation programmes and national cancer and non-cancer screening programmes.

New GP contract agreed for 2018 to 2019

DHSC has [published](#) the details of the new GP contract for 2018/19. The contract was agreed by DHSC, NHS Employers on behalf of NHS England and the British Medical Association's General Practitioners Committee and came into effect on 1st April 2018.

The new contract will see a £256 million investment in general practice. It also includes:

- an agreement that will pave the way to GPs using the NHS electronic prescription service instead of issuing paper prescriptions;
- a renewed focus on the analysis of appointment data to improve GP workflows;
- supporting the further roll out of the NHS e-referral service into general practice; and
- a commitment to end advertising of private services by GP practices which should be provided free of charge by the NHS.

National bodies agree on shared view of quality for general practice

The Regulation of General Practice Programme Board has published a [joint view](#) of the principles that define quality in general practice. The key themes of the shared view of quality for general practice are: positive experience; effective; well-led; safe; and sustainable use of resources.

By bringing together multiple definitions of quality, the Board can begin to reduce the workload and duplication for health care providers in providing evidence of outcomes for quality assurance. This was a key aim set out in the [General Practice Forward View](#), NHS England's strategy for GP services.

We need to do better on social care

The Secretary of State for Health, Jeremy Hunt, has outlined in his speech the [seven key principles](#) that will guide the Government's thinking ahead of the social care green paper. The paper is due to be published later in 2018.

The seven principles are:

1. Quality and safety embedded in service provision;
2. Whole-person integrated care within the NHS and social care systems operating as one;
3. The highest possible control given to those receiving support;
4. A valued workforce;
5. Better practical support for families and carers;
6. A sustainable funding model for social care supported by a diverse, vibrant and stable market; and
7. Greater security for all – for those born or developing a care need early in life and for those entering old age who do not know what their future care needs may be.

NHS stuck in survival mode as focus remains on short-term fixes

The House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts has published a [report](#) on sustainability and transformation in the NHS. The report finds that DHSC, NHS England and NHS Improvement are too focused on propping up the system and balancing the books in the short term and have not paid enough attention on transforming and improving patient services in the long term.

Key findings include:

- DHSC's system for funding and financially supporting the NHS focusses too much on short-term survival and limits the NHS's ability to transform services to achieve long-term sustainability;
- staff shortages across the NHS are having a serious and negative impact on both the sustainability and transformation of services; and
- the financial pressures facing NHS providers has led to the Department using money to prop up services but not to transform them to provide better care.

Signs of improvement but some concerns remain regarding providers of online GP services

The CQC has published a [report](#) on its overall findings of online primary care services based on 55 inspections since November 2016.

The findings indicate that online primary care services has improved over the last 12 months but further action from providers and the wider system is needed to ensure they are as safe as general practice in physical premises.

Key facts include:

- in February 2018, it was found that 43% of providers were not providing 'safe' care according to the relevant regulations – an improvement from the first inspections when this was 86%;
- specific concerns included:
 - inappropriate prescribing of antibiotics and prescribing high volumes of opioid-based medicines without talking to the patient's registered GP;
 - unsatisfactory approaches to safeguarding children and those who may not have the mental capacity to understand or consent to a consultation;
 - not collecting patient information or sharing information with a patient's NHS GP; and
 - inappropriate prescribing of medicines for long-term conditions.

Dramatic annual surge in online GP services as patients sign up for convenience

NHS England has [reported](#) that nearly 14 million patients across England are now securely using online services to book appointments, order repeat prescriptions and view their records.

Key facts reported include:

- an average of one million appointments are being made or cancelled online every month;
- nearly 2.3 million prescriptions are ordered online;
- GPs whose practices have embraced online services are already seeing some of the benefits, with fewer patient calls and fewer people failing to attend – saving time that could be used on other activities within the GP practice.

The article highlights one GP practice as an example which has managed to sign up 1,200 patients as part of a campaign and offers test results online. As a result, daily phone calls reduced from around 50 a day to 25 which has given staff an extra 75 minutes of time a day to spend on other areas of their work.

New medical schools to open to train doctors of the future

Health Education England (HEE) has [announced](#) that five new universities will be home to new medical schools offering undergraduate places to boost the number of doctors in specific regions. There are 1,500 new training places allocated across the country.

The new medical schools are at:

- The University of Sunderland;
- Edge Hill University;
- Anglia Ruskin University;
- University of Lincoln; and
- Canterbury Christ Church University.

NHS Digital funding awarded to projects that help ease delayed transfers of care

NHS Digital has [announced](#) the LA and NHS partnerships that have been successful in bidding for funding to help digitise their assessment, discharge and withdrawal notices. The successful partnerships are Dorset, Hackney, Lancashire, Wirral, Worcestershire, Hertfordshire and Rotherham.

The £1.4 million funding will help smooth the process of moving key information from a healthcare setting to LA social care.

NHS gets funding green light for new buildings, wards and beds

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has [announced](#) new funding available to 40 NHS hospitals and community centres to modernise and transform their buildings and services.

The £760 million investment will be spent on programmes to meet local demand, such as new urgent care centres and refurbishing mental health facilities.

Women to have dedicated midwives throughout pregnancy and birth

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has [announced](#) that the NHS plans to train more than 3,000 extra midwives over four years. The intention is that the majority of women will receive care from the same midwives throughout their pregnancy, labour and birth by 2021.

The first step towards achieving this will see 20% of women benefiting from a 'continuity of carer' model by March 2019. Research suggests that women who use this model are:

- 19% less likely to miscarry;
- 16% less likely to lose their baby; and
- 24% less likely to have a premature baby.

Help people make informed decisions when they want to quit smoking, says NICE and PHE

PHE and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence have published updated guidelines for health practitioners and stop smoking services on the best ways to help people quit smoking.

The new [guideline](#) recommends prioritising specific groups who are at the highest risk of harm from smoking, such as women who are pregnant and people with mental health problems.

It also recommends that:

- people should be asked about their smoking and encouraged to stop every time they see a health or social care worker;
- stop smoking services set existing targets, such as treating at least 5% of the estimated local population who smoke each year; and
- evidence-based interventions should be available to adults who smoke.

New calculations confirm lifestyle changes could prevent 4 in 10 cancer cases

Cancer Research UK has [published](#) a new landmark study led by its researchers which looks at the causes of cancer and how many cases in the UK are linked to each risk factor.

The findings, published in [the British Journal of Cancer](#), show that more than 135,000 cases of cancer could be prevented in the UK each year largely through lifestyle changes (around 4 in 10 cases).

In total, more than 135,000 cases of cancer could be prevented through changes such as:

- stopping smoking;
- keeping a healthy weight;
- eating a healthy diet;
- enjoying the sun safely;
- avoiding certain substances at work;
- protecting against certain infections; and

- cutting back on alcohol.

What makes us healthy?

The Health Foundation has published a [briefing](#) on the social determinants of health and explores how a person's opportunity for health is influenced by factors outside the health and social care system. It contains suggestions for further reading and, with the help of short case studies, highlights how action can create improvements in the health of the whole population, for the lasting benefit of individuals, society and the economy.

Hepatitis C in the North West report released

PHE has published a new [report](#) presenting annual data for hepatitis C in North West England.

The most recent estimates suggest at least 40,000 people across the North West acquired hepatitis C infection, and of those 27,000 have developed chronic infection. The number of infected people who have not been diagnosed is estimated to be 16,000 (a total of 40%). The highest burden of disease was found to be in the Greater Manchester area, while Lancashire and Liverpool also have high numbers of people living with hepatitis C.

Media monitoring

On Thursday 1st March 2018, the following stories were published:

- The [Independent](#) has a report about hospitals and GP practices cancelling non-urgent appointments and operations as staff struggle to make it in through the snow.
- The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has published a review showing that patients with serious mental health problems are often treated far from their homes, leaving them isolated and less likely to recover. This is reported by the [Guardian](#), [Independent](#) and [iNews](#).
- Taking a daily fish oil capsule during pregnancy and the first few months of breastfeeding may reduce a baby's risk of food allergy, the [BBC](#), [Independent](#), [Telegraph](#) and the [Times](#) report.

On Friday 2nd March 2018, the following stories were published:

- The London Ambulance Service has warned that it may no longer be able to answer all 999 calls quickly enough because its control rooms are chronically short of call handlers, the [Guardian](#) reports.
- The Chief Medical Officer has said the NHS must take a lead on tackling a "cocktail of pollutants" which are contributing to chronic sickness across the country. This is reported by the [Independent](#), [BBC](#) and [Telegraph](#).
- A plan to pay host families to take in NHS patients recovering from surgery has been revived, as Cambridgeshire county council now says it is considering a trial of the "innovative" scheme, report the [Times](#).
- Scandinavian scientists have suggested that people with diabetes could be classified into five distinct groups, with treatment tailored to their group. This is reported by the [BBC](#), [Telegraph](#) and [Times](#).

On Monday 5th March 2018, the following stories were published:

- The [Telegraph](#) and [Mail](#) report on NHS plans to launch a new scheme to support former military personnel living with mental health issues such as trauma.
- The average adult waits five months before seeking professional help for health issues such as back pain or hearing problems, reports the [Independent](#). Almost half of those surveyed saying it was because they didn't want to waste the health professional's time. The survey was run by a hearing charity who are attempting to raise awareness that hearing problems can be symptomatic of other health issues.

On Tuesday 6th March 2018, the following story was published:

- Hospitals are full of patients suffering from flu and norovirus as the NHS continues to struggle with its worst winter for seven years, reports the [Mirror](#). This story has also been covered by the [Mail](#).

On Wednesday 7th March 2018, the following stories were published:

- The [BBC](#) reports that last year 8,303 emergency calls were made by just five patients. Frequent callers are costing the health service almost £19 million a year, but mental health charity mind says it just goes to show that individuals' needs are not being met.
- Asthma UK has revealed the top 10 causes of asthma attacks and how to avoid them, reports the [Express](#).
- The [Independent](#) reports that following a healthy diet doesn't prevent the harm caused by high salt intake.

On Thursday 8th March 2018, the following stories were published:

- People living in more affluent areas will lead healthier lives for longer, reports the [Times](#). Figures from the Office for National Statistics show that health will start failing from the age of just 47 in the poorest areas. This story has also been covered by the [BBC](#), [Mail](#) and [Sun](#).
- The [Independent](#) and [Sky News](#) report that more than 81,000 patients waited longer than 4 hours to be seen in A&E in January, with 1,043 waiting more than 12 hours.
- Plans are being drawn up by the British Medical Association to prevent GPs from carrying out more than 35 appointments per day, reports the [Times](#). The aim is to reduce the risk of mistakes being made by exhausted doctors.
- PHE has issued guidance for employers which recommends banning birthday cakes from the workplace, reports the [Mail](#) and [Sun](#).

On Friday 9th March 2018, the following stories were published:

- The [Guardian](#) and [Mail](#) report on a worrying decline in living kidney donations, whilst the [Sun](#) says women are five times more likely to donate a kidney to their spouse than men.
- Cycling can hold back the effects of ageing by keep the immune system healthier for longer, reports the [Independent](#). This story has also been covered by the [Guardian](#) and the [BBC](#).
- The [Mail](#) reports on a poll for Diabetes UK which found that 83% of people think that traffic light labelling for all food and drink packaging should be legally enforced, and three-quarters think restaurants should display calorie information on their menus.

On Saturday 10th March, Sunday 11th March and Monday 12th March 2018, the following stories were published:

- The [Express](#) reports on new figures showing a sharp rise in the number of alcohol-related hospital admissions.
- PHE are warning parents against using sleep 'aids' with their babies because they could contribute to cot deaths, reports the [Sun](#).
- Prescribing knitting on the NHS could be a cost effective way to improve patients' health, reports the [Telegraph](#). The report suggesting the activity lowers blood pressure, reduces the risk of depression and slows the onset of dementia.

On Tuesday 13th March 2018, the following stories were published:

- The [Times](#) reports that 27% of people in England (that's more than 14 million patients) have multiple long-term health conditions. The study, published in the British Journal of General Practice, found this group accounts for more than half of all GP appointments.
- Pharmacists providing health checks at barber shops could help black men cut their risk of heart attack and stroke, reports the [Independent](#).
- The [Sun](#) claims that NHS staff are potentially breaching patient confidentiality by sharing photos of patients via apps such as Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger.
- Chinese takeaways and ready meals can contain as much salt as five Big Macs, reports the [Guardian](#). Action on Salt is calling on PHE to force companies to add health warnings to these products. This story has also been covered by [iNews](#), the [Express](#), [Mail](#), [Sun](#) and the [BBC](#).

On Wednesday 14th March 2018, the following stories were published:

- The [Mail](#) reports that NHS waiting times have risen by 40% in four years, with thousands of patients facing waits of up to six months for routine operations.
- The [Times](#) and [Mail](#) report that whilst retirement boots men's health, it makes little difference to women who tend to lead healthier lives prior to retirement.
- The [Express](#) reports that 20% of Type 2 diabetes cases could be prevented by regular exercise.

On Thursday 15th March 2018, the following stories were published:

- The [Telegraph](#) reports that NHS England Chief Executive Simon Stevens said that leaving the EU will enable the UK to introduce tougher rules on the food and drink industry as part of attempts to cut obesity rates. This story was also covered by the [Independent](#), [Mail](#) and [Sun](#).
- A new study has found that lonely pensioners are not visiting their GP more frequently and so are not causing additional NHS workload, reports the [Mail](#).
- Britain is falling behind on key measures of children's health such as breastfeeding and infant mortality rates, reports the [Sun](#). This story has also been covered by the [Mail](#) and [iNews](#).
- The [Times](#), reports on a study that very fit women are 90% less likely to develop dementia than those who are the least fit. This story has also been covered by the [Mail](#), [Express](#) and [Sun](#).

On Friday 16th March 2018, the following stories were published:

- The [Times](#) reports on nearly 24 million opioids now being prescribed each year on the NHS. This has also been covered by the [Guardian](#), [Express](#) and the [BBC](#), whilst [iNews](#) has focused on an 85% increase in opioid-related deaths have increased in the last 10 years.
- The [Times](#) reports that a 'digital sleeping pill' is to be made available on the NHS for the first time.
- The [Times](#) reports on a study that found whilst it is possible to be fat but fit, heavier people are still at higher risk of heart disease. This story was also covered by the [Mail](#) and [Express](#).

On Monday 19th March 2018, the following stories were published:

- Theresa May has spoken of her gratitude for the NHS and other public services whilst addressing the Conservative Spring Forum, reports [Sky News](#). This story was also covered by the [Mail](#).
- Draft legislation is being introduced to help protect NHS whistleblowers, reports the [Times](#).
- The [Telegraph](#) reports that a million patients a year could be needlessly enduring major surgery because the NHS is not adopting modern practices.
- The [Times](#) reports that a number of medical representatives are launching a lobbying campaign to ask ministers to consider the implications for Britons' public health as they negotiate Brexit.
- The President of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health has called for a 100-fold increase in NHS weight loss surgery for teens to fight an 'obesity apocalypse', reports the [Mail](#).
- The [Independent](#) reports that, within two years, 1,000 elderly people a day will be taken into hospital after a fall.
- Changing the clocks leads to more people missing their hospital appointments, reports the [Telegraph](#).
- The [Mail on Sunday](#) reported that pregnant woman could soon be offered a vaccine to prevent respiratory syncytial virus, which is responsible for one in six infant hospital admissions every year.
- The [Times](#) reports on artificial intelligence software which can accurately diagnose prostate cancer almost as accurately as specialists.
- The [Mail](#) reports that regular servings of oily fish can cut your risk of premature death by 33%.
- Children's vitamins tablets can contain more than a quarter of a child's daily sugar allowance, reports [Sun](#).

On Tuesday 20th March 2018, the following stories were published:

- The [Mail](#) reports that nearly 13,700 people have been placed in mixed-sex wards in the past year, despite ministers promising to end the use of these wards in 2010.

- The Women's Institute (WI) has called for more flexible opening hours to better support patients with dementia, reports the [Express](#).
- The [Mail](#) reports on a study that found a link between poor oral health and developing diabetes.

On Wednesday 21st March 2018, the following stories were published:

- The [Mirror](#) and [Mail](#) report that an overhaul of GP services later this year means patients will be referred to hospitals with the shortest waiting lists.
- The NHS ombudsmen has found mental health patients are being failed on a daily basis by 'appalling' care, reports the [Times](#). This story has also been covered by the [Guardian](#), [Independent](#) and [Mail](#).
- The [Telegraph](#) reports that drugs to vaccinate everyone over the age of 50 against Alzheimer's would cost the NHS £9 billion. This story has also been covered by the [Times](#), [Sun](#), [Express](#) and [Financial Times](#).
- The [Mail](#) reports on a study that claims lesbian, gay and bisexual adults are 36% less likely to have good heart health than heterosexual adults. This story has also been covered by the [Independent](#).
- The NHS claims there is no evidence the 5:2 diet prevents heart disease despite study's claims, reports the [Independent](#).

On Thursday 22nd March 2018, the following stories were published:

- The [Mail](#) reports that millions of back pain sufferers are needlessly given painkillers or undergoing unnecessary surgery, costing the NHS £2.1 billion a year. Whilst evidence shows that exercise and stretches are much more effective for easing symptoms, studies published in The Lancet found treatments often go against international guidelines. This story has also been covered by the [Times](#), [Independent](#), [Telegraph](#), [Express](#), [Sun](#), [iNews](#) and [BBC](#).
- Researchers find that consuming at least 24 ounces of sugary drinks a day makes you twice as likely to die from heart disease, reports the [Independent](#). This story has also been covered by the [Telegraph](#), [Mirror](#) and [Sun](#).
- Some blueberry muffins contain more than an adult's daily allowance of sugar, reports the [BBC](#).

On Friday 23rd March 2018, the following stories were published:

- The [Telegraph](#) reports that the Care Quality Commission is warning that online health services are prescribing high volumes of painkiller without sufficient checks being made.
- The [Times](#) reports that NICE is calling on councils to repair potholes and pedestrianise streets to encourage more people to walk and cycle. Suggestions included widening pavements and imposing more 20mph limits. This story has also been covered by the [Independent](#), [Telegraph](#) and [Mail](#).

On Monday 26th March 2018 the following stories were published:

- The [Telegraph](#) reports that GPs need to be trained about the importance of nutrition and healthy eating, so they can better address health problems linked to lifestyle and diet.
- New data reveals that the number of heart operations carried out on the NHS has now reached over 10,5000 per year, reports the [Express](#).
- Cuts in NHS budgets for tonsil surgery is leading to an increase in emergency admissions for children with more serious throat infections, reports the [Mail](#).

On Tuesday 27th March 2018, the following story was published:

- NHS desperately calls for blood donations as 'Beast from the East' causes stocks to plummet, reports the [Mirror](#). The recent bad weather has meant stocks are well below normal.

On Wednesday 28th March 2018, the following stories were published:

- NHS to recruit 24,000 teens in meningitis vaccine bid, reports the [Telegraph](#). The NHS is attempting a bid to test the first new vaccines for adolescents against the most common form of meningitis following a public outcry. Also reported in the [BBC](#).

- Doctors should prescribe e-cigarettes on the NHS to show they are less harmful than smoking, reports the [Sun](#). The charity Action on Smoking and Health told the Commons Science and Technology committee that there would be significant benefits to prescribing e-cigarettes on the NHS.
- Nine in ten children with mental illness struggle to get NHS help, reports the [Times](#). Survey finds just 3% of parents of children with a mental illness say the NHS does enough to look after them. Also reported in [iNews](#) and the [Sun](#).
- Obese mothers less likely to breastfeed than other women, reports [iNews](#). A review of research papers suggests that obese women are less likely to breastfeed than those of average weight.

On Thursday 29th March, the following stories were published:

- Health bosses say the NHS does not have enough beds or staff, reports the [BBC](#). NHS providers warned that hospital waiting lists would grow and long A&E waits would continue. Also reported in the [Times](#), [Independent](#), [iNews](#), and [Guardian](#).
- NHS watchdog says doctors must send smokers to quitting classes before operations, reports the [Sun](#). New guidelines say patients should be referred for an appointment for stop smoking sessions even if they do not want to attend.

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