

Community Nursing Healthcare Policy Update

Week ending 21st July 2017

Nurses

Decline in District and Community Nurses is a contributory factor in delayed discharge

Christie & Co [published](#) a report on adult social care which identified the fall in the number of district and community nurses as a contributory factor for delayed discharge from hospitals. Between 2010 and 2017 the number of FTE District Nurses fell by 44%, with the decline of these professionals also leading to a rise in the number of avoidable hospital admissions.

In 2016, 25% of the 2,148,394 delayed discharge days resulted from patients awaiting care home placements. The joining up of NHS and Adult Social Care is imperative in addressing delayed discharge and community nursing and care home professionals play an imperative role, most notably in extending the provision of community based services. Care home providers are seen to have the potential to offer community based healthcare services to non-residents. However, this would require providers to have appropriate accommodation with the right number of staff with the right skills needed to provide care. For those patients who have been admitted, community nursing professionals are key in providing a suitable transition out of hospital.

The report calls for policies to be implemented to ensure Community and District Nursing is sustainable and attractive. Particular focus needs to be paid to the recruitment of new professionals and retaining current nurses. Whilst training, funding and support are essential, a joined-up approach with hospitals, social care and wider NHS systems is also imperative.

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) [commented](#): "*District and community nursing staff should be there to help older people to stay well and live independently for longer. But the loss of nearly half is one of the reasons older people aren't being properly supported*".

Mental Health

Care in mental health services

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) [published](#) '*The State of Care in Mental Health Services 2014 to 2017*'. In 2015/16 approximately 1.8 million people had contact with adult learning disability and mental health services, whilst the number of detentions under the Mental Health Act increased by 26% between 2012/13 to 2015/16. Between 2010 and 2017, the number of mental health nurses fell by 12%.

The CQC rated 68% of core NHS services as good, with 6% rated outstanding. 72% of core independent service rated as good with 3% being outstanding. Community mental health services rated particularly well, with staff more consistently skilled and trained and patients involved in their own care:

- Services for older people; 76% good, 10% outstanding
- Services for people with autism or learning disabilities; 80% good, 9% outstanding.

Staff across all services genuinely cared about those patients using services, with strong patient/staff relationships and patients treated in a respectful and dignified manner. 88% of NHS services were rated as good for compassionate and caring staff, with 9% outstanding. 93% of independent services rated as good and 5% were outstanding.

A significant number of NHS and independent services require improvement (25% NHS, 23% independent), with specific areas identified as follows:

- Safety: 34% of independent and 36% of NHS services were rated as needing improvement for safety. Reasons for this include staffing levels and physical environments
- Waiting times and access
- Persisting with restrictive practice: Physical restraint was used when faced with challenging behaviour and the location of wards often leaves people isolated from family and friends
- Inadequate information systems: Staff use systems that are not fit-for-purpose as they struggle to locate information, enter information repeatedly on different systems and electronic and paper methods are combined. This meant time was ill-spent, information was not always communicated and care plans were not reflective of the multi-disciplinary team or the patient.

NHS Providers commented: “*While we are undoubtedly seeing some welcome extra funding and new initiatives, it is clear that core mental health services are coming under intolerable pressure ... We welcome the repeated commitments from the very top of government to address the injustices faced by people with mental health problems*”.

Other

Investment for NHS transformation projects

£325 million in funds to support Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs) is being invested into local projects across 15 areas of the country, which developed the strongest schemes within their STP plans. The funds mean patients will experience easier access to mental health care, some A&E services expanded, shorter waiting times for procedures, faster diagnosis for conditions such as cancer and an increase in services provided in GP surgeries.

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) [commented](#): “*STPs are crucial to delivering the GP Forward View in England, which should be a lifeline for struggling general practice. If they fail to prioritise general practice, it is only a matter of time before GPs and their teams collapse, with the rest of the NHS following closely behind*”.

Department of Health's annual accounts and report

The Department of Health [published](#) its 2016/17 annual report and accounts. Key points include:

- An increase of 500,000 more A&E contacts managed
- The NHS workforce increased by 2.1%
- CQC rated 89% of primary care and 76% of social care as excellent or good
- A funding increase of £3.8 billion in the NHS sector
- Financial balance was largely delivered by the NHS
- The non-NHS sector absorbed pressures of £0.7 billion.

The Health Foundation [commented](#): “*The financial outlook for the next few years is incredibly tough – funding per person will fall in both 2018/19 and 2019/20 under current spending plans ... Before the election the government committed to additional capital funding and an increase in spending on day to day running costs. Additional investment will be vital if the NHS is to deliver on its vision to improve and transform services for patients*”.

NHS Providers [commented](#): “*The Department of Health has stabilised its financial position, but we remain concerned that the underlying picture for the sector is unsustainable in the long term ... There is strong evidence that the sector is facing a large and growing gap in capital funding*”.

Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STPs) ratings

NHS England [published](#) ratings of STPs. Of the 44:

- Five are ‘outstanding’
- Twenty are ‘advanced’
- Fourteen are ‘making progress’
- Five ‘needs improvement’.

NHS Providers [commented](#): “*The NHS England rating of STP plans presents a useful picture of where partnerships are progressing well and those that are at an early stage and may need more support. It is important that this benchmark is used to inform and support all STPs*”.