

Community Nursing Healthcare Policy Update

Week ending 6th October 2017

Nursing

Workforce reforms

Jeremy Hunt [announced](#) major reforms to the nursing workforce, in order to increase training places and retain staff. Included in the reforms are:

- A 25% increase in training posts.
- Funding for clinical placements for a further 5,170 pre-registration nurse degree students from 2018.
- An additional 5,000 nursing associates trained under the apprenticeship programme in 2018, with a further 7,500 trained in 2019.
- The introduction of a shortened nurse degree apprenticeship for qualified nursing associates wishing to work under the registered nurse status.
- Exploring ways for higher education institutes to provide formal classroom teaching in more innovative ways and within employer facilities.
- 'Homes for Nurses' scheme giving NHS employees' first refusal on any affordable housing generated through NHS land being sold.
- Plans to support flexible working.
- Staff banks across the NHS, which provide opportunity to work on NHS terms.

The Nuffield Trust [commented](#): *"Investing now to train the nurses of the future is not only sensible, it is essential. The real test for this proposal will come in how readily these new places are taken up. With the abolition of nursing bursaries, we have to hope that potential nurses continue to be attracted to the profession ... Tackling staff shortages must go hand in hand with efforts to improve low morale across the health service"*.

Mental Health

Review of mental health

Theresa May announced [plans](#) for a review of mental health practice and legislation in order to address mental health detention. Under the Mental Health Act, rates of detention have been too high, with numbers rising every year; 2016 saw approximately

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180 cases a day in which people were sectioned. People from black and minority ethnic populations are also around four times more likely to be detained under the Act.

Half of over 55 year olds have experienced mental health problems

A YouGov [survey](#) for Age UK has found that almost half of over 55 year olds (7.7 million) have experienced depression with an approximately similar number (7.3 million) having suffered anxiety. 21% reported that their depression and anxiety worsened with age, whilst 25% felt it was difficult to talk about their mental health, compared to young people. The reasons for this included generational differences and fear of stigma.

The research identified the most common triggers for mental health problems were the death of a loved one (36%), financial worries (27%) and ill-health (24%). 35% of respondents did not know how to get help and support. 72% of over 55s felt an increased number of opportunities to interact with others was the best approach to mental health problems and 35% felt talking therapy would be helpful.

The research coincides with NHS England's new [guidance](#) for GPs to help identify signs of mental health problems in older people and will see a [partnership](#) between NHS England and Age UK under which older people will be encouraged to seek support.

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) [commented](#): *"Mental health is a priority for GPs and we work with people with a range of mental health problems. However, many older people still feel there is a stigma attached to talking about depression and we need to persuade more that opening up and talking about their mental health issues is not a sign of weakness. Anxiety and depression are potentially serious mental health conditions for people of all ages and must be treated as such ... It is essential that we strive to give mental health the same parity of esteem that physical health problems have – in the NHS and throughout society – and in doing so reduce some of the unfortunate, and unwarranted, stigma that some patients face".*

Publications

Health and care, winter risks

NHS Providers published an updated [report](#) on the previous '[Winter Warning](#)' published in June. Key points include:

- Delayed transfers of care (DTOC) account for a significant amount of NHS capacity. The £1 billion of additional funds for social care, has not reduced care related DTOC. This is a whole system issue and therefore requires both short and long-term solutions from every part of the health and care service.

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- Frontline leaders' report a number of positive steps have been implemented which should boost capacity and enhance performance compared to last year. Steps include systematic approaches to improving performance, an increased investment in social care, supporting new care models and placing greater emphasis on winter performance.
- However, frontline leaders cite a number of factors which threaten performance, create additional pressures and have the potential to reduce capacity. These included consistently high levels of DTOC, increasing demand, a reduction in the NHS' capacity, workforce pressures.

The report calls for the following action to be taken:

- Further investment, of at least £200 million, to meet the extra capacity the increased social care funding has failed to develop.
- Funding can derive from two places; a repayable advance or from the Conservative Party's manifesto pledge of £8 billion for the NHS.
- NHS England and NHS Improvement should identify which systems benefit from increased investment.
- Investment should be directed at those systems most of risk from segmentation.
- A commitment on additional funding should be made in the immediate future, permitting local systems time to plan the most efficient and effective way of using such.