

# Community Nursing Healthcare Policy Update Summary

## April 2017

### General Election 2017

Theresa May called a snap general election to be held on June 8<sup>th</sup>. Both central and local government went into purdah on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, which prohibits any information to be released.

Health sector organisations are unanimous in calling for all political parties to place the health and care service at the heart of their election campaigns:

- [The Royal College of Nursing \(RCN\)](#) *"will challenge all parties to give health and care services the funding and staff they need for safe patient care"*.
- [The British Medical Association \(BMA\)](#) *"[health] must be a central issue in the upcoming election. The NHS must not be pushed to the margins in the focus of Brexit ... We call on politicians of all parties not to duck this crisis any longer, and instead to outline credible and sustainable plans that will safeguard the future of the fully funded and support NHS that staff want and patients deserve"*.
- [The Royal College of GPs \(RCGP\)](#) *"It is vital that patient care is kept at the forefront of debate over the coming weeks"*.

Further to this, health organisations are calling on the future government to prioritise the sustainability of the health and care service:

- [The Royal College of Midwives \(RCM\)](#) *"We want to see the next government invest in the NHS, invest in maternity services and invest in the welfare and pay of NHS staff so that they can provide safe and high quality services for the people they care for"*.
- The Nuffield Trust proposes that NHS funding and staffing issues are top priorities for the next government.
- [The Royal College of GPs \(RCGP\)](#) *"We will continue to press for the urgent delivery of all the pledges made in NHS England's GP Forward view – and for equivalent investment in GP services in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland"*.

### Labour's three-point pledge

The Labour Party launched their [three-point pledge](#) for NHS staff. If elected staff will see;

- **Better pay** with the 1% pay cap abolished

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- **Fully funded training** with the re-introduction of training bursaries
- **Safe staffing levels** with legislation to ensure this.

### UKIP's election campaign launch

The UK Independence Party (UKIP) have [committed](#) that the NHS will remain free at the point of delivery and in public hands. They have also pledged the National Health Service will not be an 'international health service' and funds from the abolishment of the foreign aid budget will be redirected to the NHS.

## **Nursing**

### Industrial Action

As of April 1<sup>st</sup>, all NHS staff on Agenda for Change contracts, dentists and doctors received a 1% pay rise. However, in real terms, this equate to a pay cut. The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is surveying its 270,000 members to see if they want to take industrial action. The poll will close on May 7<sup>th</sup>.

### Pay policy and nurse numbers

The Health Foundation published a [report](#) on pay policy and nurse numbers, two of the most imperative issues in workforce policy and posing long-term and immediate risks in the NHS' ability to maintain high quality care.

- At present, the NHS in England does not have enough nurses. In 2015, there was a shortfall of 22,000 nurses (approximately 10% of the workforce) who specialised in caring for adult patients. By 2020 it is estimated that there will be a shortfall of 42,000 nurses (all)
- Brexit has made the workforce crisis more acute. In 2013/14, one in three new nurse registrations were made by people from EU countries. Since 2013, the number of health visitors and nurses from EU countries has increased to 22,000 whilst other countries (including the UK) have grown by just 3%. The number of EU applicants for nursing degrees in 2016 is 25% lower than 2015 and 50% more EU nurses (3,500) left the NHS in 2016 compared to 2014
- 49% of nurses believe staff levels are not sufficient to permit them to do their job efficiently
- Pay, in real terms, is declining. Between 2010 and 2017 health and social care staff's has fallen by 6% whilst between 2010/11 and 2020/21, NHS staff's pay will decrease by 12%.

### Link between low nurse staffing and patient mortality

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The University of Southampton has provided the first England specific evidence linking low nurse staffing to patient mortality. The [study](#) found that during the course of the first five days of hospitalisation, each day a patient was on a ward with the a number of nurses below that required, the risk of death increased by 3%. A correlation was also found between temporary nursing and patient death – when temporary nurses provided 1.5 or more hours of care over a 24 hour period, the risk of death increased by 12%.

#### Nurse shortage in children's hospices

A [survey](#) of 25 children's hospices has found a shortage of nurses and with an increasing number of children relying on services, services are suffering. The average vacancy was 11%, higher than the over NHS nurse vacancy rate of 9%, and equating to over 130 vacant positions. Furthermore, challenges were met in filling positions with 65% vacant for over three months and 25% for more than a year.

### **GPs**

#### GPs leaving profession

A [survey](#) of over 2,000 GPs in the South-West of England has found that 40% plan on leaving the profession in the next five years. 54% of respondents reported low morale, whilst 70% were considering altering their work pattern to involve less patient contact.

The Royal College of GPs (RCGP) has called for urgent action in [response](#) to this;

- *"As well as stepping up efforts to recruit more GPs and make general practice an attractive profession, it is clear that we also need new initiatives to improve retention".*

### **Mental Health**

#### Thousands left to cope alone after leaving mental health hospitals

The charity Mind released [figures](#) which show one in ten people, admitted in a crisis, are not receiving a follow-up within a week of being discharged from a mental health hospital. This equates to approximately 11,000 people each year. The NICE guidance advised patients should receive a follow-up (contact to ensure ongoing support is available) within 7 days, as people are at risk of post-discharge suicides. Whilst a 48 hour follow-up is currently only recommended for particular patients, Mind is calling for this to be extended to everyone discharged following a crisis.

#### NHS transition, intervention and liaison (TIL) veterans' mental health service

NHS England will [launch](#) a new mental health service specifically tailored to support ex-armed forces veterans and service personnel who are being discharged. The service will act as a gateway to an array of mental health services across the health and care system, with various levels of support, treatment and experts readily available. Referrals to the service can either be self-made or be requested through GPs, mental health providers or military charities. Through partnership working with local authorities and a range of charities, service users, and their family, are able to have all of their needs met, with the service providing a smooth transition to the NHS and civilian life.

## **Social care**

### Cuts to adult social care

The Institute for Fiscal Studies published a [report](#) on the different amounts local authorities spent on adult social care and how austerity was affecting spend.

- The amount of funding local authorities allocated to social care depended on need for social care and the financial pressures facing local authorities
- Austerity cuts have had more impact on relatively poorer local authorities, making them reliant on government grants which in turn, affects funds available for social care
- Adult social care expenditure by local authorities equates to approximately £381 per adult residing in England. There was variation across the country with 10% of local authorities spending under £325 per resident and 10% spending more than £445
- The income from charges and fees raised by local authorities is approximately £2.7 billion
- There is a strong link between the amount local authorities spend on adult social care services and the overall levels local authorities spend on services
- Between 2009/10 and 2015/16, one in ten local authorities cut spending by over 25%. One in seven local authorities increased their amount of spend
- Cuts to levels of funding to social care have been greater in those areas who previously demonstrated high levels of spend
- Local authorities with a high spending need have seen greater cuts.

### Social care workers resigning

Reports [reveal](#) that in 2015/16 approximately 338,520 adult social care workers resigned, this equates to 928 resignations every day. Concerns are growing over a shortfall of staff leaving vulnerable people receiving poorer levels of care. With an ageing population, demand for adult social care services is only set to increase.

- 60% of those resigning, left the adult social care sector completely

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- One in four social care workers was on a zero hours contract
- Approximately one in twenty care roles was vacant, equating to a shortage of 84,320 care workers
- A full-time frontline carer earned an average of £14,800 per annum, compared to the median UK salary of approximately £27,600.

## **Innovation**

### Improvement lab launched

NHS Improvement and The Health Foundation [launched](#) the 'Improvement Lab', which will bring together a range of people from the health sector, to explore innovative approaches to addressing challenges faced in health and health care. Solutions are tested to ensure they bring about long-term benefits to health professionals and patients. The Lab will provide opportunity for initiatives to be trialled directly with those in the health sector, with feedback quickly turned around and shared.

### Surgery-based clinical pharmacists

NHS England [announced](#) that 700 more practices (covering six million patients) will have a pharmacist based in their GP surgery. The pharmacists will work a part of the practice team, providing medication advice and patient consultations. It is hoped this will deliver immediate access to patients wanting clinical advice and permit GPs to spend more time with those patients with complex needs.

### Homeless Health Programme announced

From May 2017, The Queen's Nursing Institute will begin a [programme](#) supporting nurse leadership, innovation and education in the field of homeless health. The partnership between the QNI and the charity Oak Foundation will permit a network of housing, health and other professionals, alongside those currently, or with history of being homeless, to attend networking and learning days about health issues. Up to ten nurses will also receive funds to develop innovative approaches to improve healthcare for those currently homeless.

### Pioneering digital services for mental health patients

NHS England [announced](#) funding for seven mental health trusts to pioneer digital services to improve care. In addition to all professionals involved in the care of a patient being provided access to real-time records, trusts will establish remote, mobile and assistive technology enabling carers/family to provide support, whilst empowering patients to manage their conditions.

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## Publications

### The Long-term Sustainability of the NHS and Adult Social Care

The House of Lords published a [report](#) raising concerns as to the sustainability of the NHS and adult social care system. The report highlights that, as they operate today, both are unsustainable and cites a “culture of short-termism seems to prevail in the NHS and adult social care”. The following recommendations were made;

- An Office for Health and Care Sustainability should be established, with the independence to speak freely about related issues
- With increasing emphasis on place-based and integrated care, NHS Improvement and NHS England should merge to create a new regulatory body
- A NHS that is free-at-the-point-of-delivery and funded by taxes remains the best model for sustainability. Spending should increase, in real-terms, in line with GDP and social care should receive funding that reflects need and aligns with NHS funding
- The Department of Health should be renamed to the ‘Department of Health and Care’ and should include responsibility for funding, at a national level, adult social care
- An insurance-based scheme should be introduced, allowing those wanting to pay for their own care to do so
- Health Education England should become an integrated strategic workforce planning body
- Health Education England should lead on altering the culture of conservatism that currently prevails among those training and educating the workforce
- Government should ensure that the take up of technology and innovation takes priority. Those areas falling behind in the adoption of innovation and technology should be clearly informed of the service delivery and funding consequences
- Ring-fenced national and local public health funds should be introduced, with funds cut over recent years restored
- The government should clearly advise the public that access to NHS services involves both patient rights and responsibility. The public should also be educated as to the costs of poor lifestyle choices on the NHS.

The response from [The Nuffield Trust](#) welcomed plans to increase funding but raised concerns over a decreasing workforce; “*whereas the financial difficulties can be largely solved by increased funding, the loss of the experienced, highly trained staff who are currently leaving the health service in droves cannot be easily reversed*”.

The [British Medical Association](#) (BMA) welcomed the report for highlighting funding and staffing challenges in threatening the provision of high-quality care. “*The NHS is at breaking point and this can only be relieved through increasing investment based on a*

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*realistic assessment of what is needed to meet the health and social care needs of current and future generations”.*

#### Progress for all NHS trusts in England on race quality standards

The NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard [published](#) the '2016 Data Analysis Report for NHS Trusts'. The report demonstrates progress;

- The number of BME nurses and midwives at (agenda for change) bands six to nine has increased since 2014
- Between 2015 and 2016, there was an increase of 4.4% in the number of very senior managers from BME backgrounds
- The percentage of BME staff who have reported discrimination at work has decreased slightly.

Conversely, the report highlighted areas in which progression is needed;

- BME representation at very senior manager and board level remains low in comparison to the overall BME NHS workforce and local communities
- BME employees are more likely to face disciplinary action
- BME applicants are 1.57 times less likely to be appointed from shortlisting
- BME employees are more likely to suffer discrimination from managers and colleagues
- The percent of BME and white staff likely to experience bullying, harassment and abuse from the public and patients is equal.

#### Health and Care of People with Learning Disabilities

NHS Digital [published](#) 'Health and Care of People with Learning Disabilities: Experimental Statistics: 2015 to 2016. The information from more than half of GP practices in England identifies potential differences in the health status, treatment and outcomes of those with learning disabilities, in comparison to the rest of the population.

- 46% of patients whose GP is aware of their learning disability received an annual learning disability health check, an increase from 43% in 2014/15
- Life expectancy of females with learning disabilities with 18 years shorter than the general population, with males around 14 years shorter.

#### **Other**

##### Contaminated blood inquiry

Andy Burnham MP has [demanded](#) an inquiry into a “criminal cover-up on an industrial scale” over the NHS contaminating blood. During the 1970s and 1980s blood products were given to haemophiliacs which subsequently saw them infected with HIV and

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hepatitis C. Burnham spoke of evidence which suggests patients were used as “guinea pigs”, medical records falsified with “slurs and smears” and tests carried out on unknowing patients without consent and with the results of such withheld.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, Nicola Blackwood, has resisted further inquiries.

#### Allocation of A&E funds

Over half of the £100 million A&E fund announced in the Spring Budget has been [allocated](#). £55.98 million has been provided to 70 hospitals to ascertain patients are treated in the most appropriate setting, ensure 95% of patients are admitted, treated and discharged within four hours and prepare A&E departments for winter pressures.

#### Sugar tax

MPs have approved amendments to the Finance Bill, including legislation to introduce the Soft Drinks Industry Levy in April 2018.