

Community Nursing Healthcare Policy Update

May Summary

General Election

Party manifestos were published.

The Conservatives

[‘Forward, together: Our plan for a stronger Britain and a prosperous future’](#) pledged the following on community healthcare:

- *‘Enable more care to be delivered closer to home by building and upgrading primary care facilities, mental health clinics and hospitals in every part of England’.*
- *‘Supporting more integrated working, including ensuring community pharmacies can play a stronger role to keep people healthy outside hospital within the wider health system’.*

Theresa May, Prime Minister and leader of the Conservatives, proposed changes to social care funding (those with savings and property with a combined value of over £100,000 are to pay towards their own care, be it residential or domiciliary). If elected, the amount people pay for their care will be capped, with this determined by a consultation and Green Paper.

The Labour Party

[‘For the many, not the few’](#) pledged the following on the community healthcare:

- *‘Focus resources to provide care closer to home and deliver a truly 21st century health system’.*
- *‘Work towards a new model of community care that takes into account not only primary care but also social care and mental health’.*

The Liberal Democrats

[‘Change Britain’s future’](#) pledged the following on community healthcare:

- *‘Home for social not hospital: better integration of health and asocial care and limiting the amount elderly people have to pay for care’.*
- *‘Support innovation in how organisations can empower staff and patients, including learning from innovative social enterprises delivering community and mental health services’.*

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By Louise Clanfield, QNI Research Officer.

- *'Provide national support to struggling GP practices, preventing mass practice closures'.*
- *'Use innovation funding to promote GP-led multidisciplinary health and care hubs, including mobile services to keep people out of hospital'.*
- *'Encourage GPs and other community clinicians to work in disadvantaged areas through our Patient Premium – which would give incentive payments to clinicians'.*

The Nuffield Trust [advised](#) that the amount of money pledged by the Conservative Party, Labour Party and Liberal Democrats are insufficient in closing the funding gap, managing demand and providing high quality care.

Nurses

Industrial action

The Royal College of Nursing's (RCN) poll concerning pay closed, having received approximately 52,000 responses. Whilst this is not enough to authorise a formal ballot, there was a strong appetite for industrial action, with 78% being prepared to strike and 91% favouring action short of a strike.

A summer of protests have been proposed, with members urged to coordinate local action and take on 'pay champion' roles. Should pay restraint fail to be addressed by the next government, an industrial ballot will be held.

Workforce crisis

40,000 nurse positions are vacant in England [according](#) to figures from The Royal College of Nursing (RCN). Around 12,000 health care support roles are unfilled, whilst mental health and community care is suffering the greatest staff shortages.

The RCN [reported](#) a decline in the number of school nurses and health visiting workforce.

- Since 2015, the number of health visitors decreased by approximately 1,000
- Between 2010 and 2017, the number of school nurses (FTE) decreased by 16%, whilst the number of school aged pupils increased by 450,000
- 14% of public health spending cuts have fallen on services aiming to improve children and young people's health. Further reductions to the number of public health nurses is at the core of many service change proposals.

Innovation

School nurses and health visitors in Norfolk are to [receive](#) dual-training in one another's field. With school nurses focusing on teenagers and health visitors on children up to the age of five, primary school children, particularly with special educational needs and disabilities, are missing out on care. It is hoped that dual-training nurses will forestall this group of children from developing health problems.

Wrexham Glyndwr University in North Wales will [launch](#) a fee-paying undergraduate nursing course, offering placements provided by five NHS trusts in England. A range of placements will be offered in both England and Wales by private providers and NHS trusts.

Other

The RCN [reported](#) that between October and December 2016, 510 calls (equating to eight nurses a day) were made to a support line, seeking financial assistance. Of those who received a grant, one in four were employed full-time.

GPs

Workforce crisis

According to [figures](#) released by NHS Digital there are approximately 42,250 GPs, 34,372 of which are full-time equivalent. Excluding locums, this figure is 40,038, a decrease of 0.1% from 31/12/2016.

The Royal College of GPs (RCGP) [warned](#) that over three million patients could be left without a GP, should the 2,137 EU national GPs be made to leave the UK, following Brexit. EU nationals account for 5% of the GP workforce in England, 4% in Scotland and Wales and 11% in Northern Ireland.

Mental Health

Research

The Mental Health Foundation [published](#) research into the self-reporting of mental health.

- Two-thirds of people report experiencing a mental health problem, with this rising to seven in 10 women, young adults and those living alone
- 13% of people report a high level of good mental health
- Those aged 55 and over, report better mental health than average
- Approximately four in ten people have experienced depression

- 85% of those unemployed have experienced a mental health problem, compared to two-third of those currently employed

Bath Spa University [found](#) care home staff employed on zero-hour contracts (an employer is not required to provide minimum working hours and the employee is not required to accept work offered) are more likely to suffer mental health problems. The research cited control and understanding of a job role as important determinants of health.

Innovation

Nottinghamshire Health Foundation Trust [launched](#) an 'Urgent Mental Health Line' to assist patients who, although not a crisis point, are not able to wait for a routine appointment with a mental health professional. This will permit GPs to obtain advice from psychiatrists, with those unable to be supported over the phone to have a community visit within three working days.

Four NHS Trusts in England are [trailing](#) new mother and baby units, as part of the £365 million investment in perinatal mental health services. The inpatient units will ensure that new mothers, who are at risk of mental health problems, are able to stay with their baby.

Community Care

Providers of community care

The Health Foundation [published](#) a paper on the providers of community care, with information obtained from 78% of all Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) on 7,494 contracts. Whilst private providers held 39% of contracts and the NHS 21%, contracts of a higher value were awarded to NHS providers. The average contract values for the NHS were more than £3.5 million, whilst private sector contracts were approximately £200,000.

Cancer patients

Macmillan [reported](#) that 64% of people with cancer want to die in their home, however 38% (over 62,000) of those who die from cancer, do so in hospital.

Social Care

Increasing care costs

A [study](#) has predicated a 25% increase in the number of people needing care between 2015 and 2025. Approximately three million people over the age of 65 will need

nursing, social care and be unable to manage independently. This is likely to have significant increase on the UK's health and social care system.

NHS

Cyberattack

Several NHS services across England and Scotland were targeted in a ransomware cyber-attack. There is no evidence that patient information had been compromised and affected [services](#) are generally resuming as normal.

Monthly performance statistics

NHS England [published](#) performance statistics for March 2017.

- A&E attendance increased by 2.2%
- Ambulance calls receiving a face-to-face response increased by 5%
- Emergency admissions increased by 4.7%.

Trusts overspend by £770 million

NHS trusts in England [reportedly](#) overspent by £770 million in 2016/17. However, given that trusts received bailout funding of £1.8 billion during the year, it is estimated the true overspend is £2.5 billion.

Other

Opinion surveys

The Health Foundation commissioned a [survey](#) on the provision of health and care services and NHS funding:

- 88% believe healthcare funding should be protected
- 50% believe the NHS wastes money
- Approximately two-thirds were in favour of tax increases to fund the NHS
- 87% believed existing health and care EU employees should be granted residence following Brexit.

An [opinion poll](#) by 'The Independent' newspaper found three in four believe the NHS is in a poor condition. Of the current problems facing the NHS:

- 51% blamed the Conservative Party
- 20% blamed the Labour Party
- "While 13 per cent blame NHS staff".

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Legislation

The Public Health (Wales) Bill passed. This requires the Welsh Government to develop a strategy on obesity and also makes smoking in public playgrounds, hospital grounds and school grounds illegal