

Community Nursing Healthcare Policy Update

Monthly Summary: July

Nurses

More nurses and midwives are leaving than joining

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) released figures which show that more nurses and midwives are leaving the register than joining. UK nurses make up 85% of the register, but between 2016 and 2017, 45% more left than joined. The figures also reveal the number of nurses leaving before retirement age has increased.

Decline in the number of applications for nursing courses

Figures released by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) revealed that, at final deadline, 40,060 applicants in England had applied for a nursing course. A year prior, this figure was 51,840, representing a 23% decline in the number of nursing applications. A fall in the number of applicants for nursing courses was also seen outside of England; with Northern Ireland seeing a decline of 6%, Wales 10% and Scotland 2%.

Declining workforce numbers impacting on hospital admission and discharge

A report by Christie & Co identified that the declining number of district and community nurses served as a contributory factor in delayed hospital discharge and increased admissions. The number of FTE District Nurses fell by 44% between 2010 and 2017. In 2016, patients waiting for care home placements accounted for 25% of the 2,148,394 delayed discharge days.

Primary Care

GP Patient Survey

Results from the GP Patient Survey were published by NHS England. These provide insight into the patient experience of accessing and using these services.

- 84.8% reported a 'good' experience with their GP surgery, with 49.2% reporting a 'very good' experience
- 91.9% reported feeling confidence and trust in the last GP they saw, a fall of 0.3% from the year prior.
- 84.5% reported feeling confidence and trust in the last practice nurse they saw, a fall of 0.1% in the preceding year.

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Waiting times for GP and practice nurse appointments could increase

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) have warned that should current trends continue, patients waiting more than a week for a GP or practice nurse appointment will be the case in over 100 million occasions by 2022.

Social Care

CQC to review health and social care systems

Health and social care systems in 12 local authorities are to be reviewed by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The reviews will assess the governance of resources and commissioning, with local authorities receiving tailored responses as to the biggest challenges they face.

Adult social care services assessed

The CQC published a report outlining the findings from inspections of adult social care services between 2014 and 2017.

- Four in five adult social care services in England were rated 'outstanding' or 'good'
- Community social care services received the best ratings overall. However, nursing homes present a significant concern
- Generally speaking, smaller services caring for fewer people received higher ratings than larger services caring for a larger number of people.

NHS

NHS performance statistics

NHS England released performance statistics for May 2017. These showed the following:

- Emergency admissions had increased by 2.7%
- A&E attendance had increased by 2%
- Ambulance calls requiring an in-person response increased by 4%.

Funding released for NHS transformation projects

£325 million has been invested into local projects which have developed the strongest schemes under their Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs). The funding

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will see A&E services expanded, shorter waiting times, faster diagnoses and easier access to mental health services.

Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STPs) ratings

Ratings of 44 STPs were published by NHS England:

- Five were 'outstanding'
- Twenty were 'advanced'
- Fourteen were 'making progress'
- Five 'needs improvement'.

New ambulance targets

NHS England has set new performance targets for the ambulance service. 999 call handlers will be given more time to assess and determine the most appropriate response, with ambulances expected to reach the most critical patients within seven minutes. Unlike current targets, the clock will stop once the most appropriate respondent arrives at the scene, rather than the first.

Workforce statistics

NHS Digital published workforce statistics for April 2017:

- There are 1,186,420 members of staff in the NHS, a 0.1% fall since March 2017
- Professionally qualified staff account for 54.0% of the total workforce.

Advertised vacancies

NHS Digital published statistics on the number of advertised vacant positions. In March 2017, there 30,613 positions were vacant, a significant increase on the 2016 (26,424) and 2015 (26,406). Of all full-time equivalent (FTE) vacancies, nursing and midwifery positions accounted for 38%.

Mental Health

Funding for projects supporting children and young people

Health Education England (HEE) has shared £3 million amongst 26 organisations to support workforce development, training and transformation, which will improve mental health outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.

Publications

Population's Health in England

Public Health England published their 'Health Profile for England', which provides an overview of the population in England's health. Key points include:

- Life expectancy has increased and now stands at 83.1 for females and 79.5 for males. We are now spending more time in good health (64.1 years for females, 63.4 for males) and poor health (19 years for females, 16.1 for males).
- Dementia is now the leading cause of death, with this partly deriving from an increased awareness of the condition.
- Health inequalities have significant impact upon life expectancy. Those living in the most deprived areas have a lower life expectancy of 7 years less for females and 9 years less for males, compared to those in the least deprived areas.
- Socio-economic factors influence our health, with the most significant determinants being employment, NEETS (16-24 year olds not in employment, education or training) and fuel poverty.

Health overviews for each local authority were also published by Public Health England. These give an overview of the most significant factors impacting upon the given population's health.

Person-centred approaches framework

Health Education England, Skills for Health and Skills for Care published a framework to encourage person-centred approaches in healthcare. The framework includes advice for health and social care workers about meaningful communication and personalising patient care.

Other

Public inquiry into contaminated blood scandal

The Government announced that a public inquiry into the contaminated blood scandal will take place. During the 1970s and 80s haemophiliac patients were given blood products infected with HIV and Hepatitis C; 2,400 people died as a result. Evidence emerged regarding "a criminal cover-up on an industrial scale" and included patient records altered, tests undertaken on patients without their consent or knowledge, with the results of such withheld.

CCG and Council to collaborate

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NHS Luton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has announced plans to work in collaboration with Luton Borough Council in order to support their population's health and wellbeing. The agreement between the two will see the introduction of a single system of integrated funding and resources which will bring together a range of health commissioners and create a system which is accessible and understandable for everyone.

Health Committee chair

Dr Sarah Wollaston MP has been elected chair of the Health Committee.