

NHS Reform Fortnightly Update

20th May 2021

Retrospective report: 7th May – 20th May

10th May

The *Financial Times* [reports](#) that after a year of diverting large resources towards fighting the coronavirus pandemic, the NHS is now scaling up its Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to cope with the enormous backlog of patients whose medical care has been side-lined by the crisis. The number of patients waiting for operations stands at roughly 4.7m people, including more than 387,000 who have been waiting for more than a year, for a range of serious conditions from cancers to cardiovascular illness and chronic kidney disease.

At the heart of the NHS's efforts to roll out AI is the NHSX AI lab and the Accelerated Access Collaborative, the new umbrella organisation for UK health innovation. Together, these bodies provide a gateway for companies trying to sell their clinical tools and devices across the health service. Efforts to scale up AI in healthcare will help doctors to cope with increasing burdens of care in an ageing population and help to offset the growing shortages of specialists across the health service.

13th May

On 13 May, NHS England [announced](#) a £160 million initiative to tackle waiting lists and develop a blueprint for elective recovery. Indicators suggest operations and other elective activity were already at four fifths of pre-pandemic levels last month, which exceeds the 70% threshold set out in official guidance. NHS England is now trialling new ways of working and has announced seventeen 'elective accelerators', made up of a dozen areas and five specialist children's hospitals. These sites will each receive a share of £160 million along with additional support to implement and evaluate innovative ways to increase the number of elective operations they deliver. Speaking on the day of the announcement, Professor Neil Mortensen, President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England said: "We welcome today's announcement of funding for accelerator sites to explore and test new ways to get the elective backlog down. It will take both innovation and collaboration to reduce the huge waiting list that has built up over the last year. Embedding the learnings and innovation is key to the future sustainability of surgical services."

14th May

On 14 May, the Health and Social Care Committee published its first [report](#) into the government's White Paper proposals for the reform of Health and Social Care. In general, the Committee welcomed the proposals and the "direction of travel" of reform. On integrated care systems (ICSs) the Committee agreed that they have the potential to improve the delivery of care services for patients, provided that proper accountability mechanisms are put in place. On social care, the Committee were concerned that the White Paper did not set out a long-term plan for social care as the absence of a plan has the potential to destabilise ICSs and undermine their success. On additional powers for the Secretary of State, the Committee recommended that the Bill include provisions that set out in detail, both the range and restrictions that will apply to each of the additional powers proposed including provisions for transparency around ministerial interventions and the operation of the public interest test.

14th May

On 14 May, the *Health Service Journal* posted a new podcast [episode](#) which looks at how the government's NHS reform plans are changing. Health correspondents from the site discussed government concessions on some crucial legal details, ministers' new priorities for the service, getting to grips with implementation, and what the change in NHS England's chief executive might mean.

19th May

On 19 May, MP's debated the Queen's Speech with a focus on the government's plans for the NHS and social care. Mr Hancock said that integrated working had been one of the most important lessons of the crisis, and that the Health and Social Care Bill will allow for a more preventive, population health-based approach to how the government spends NHS money. He also confirmed that the government will bring forward proposals for social care reform later in the year. The full transcript of the debate can be found [here](#).

20th May

Wales' new Health Minister Eluned Morgan [says](#) she faces a "gargantuan task" to tackle "record high" NHS waiting list in Wales caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Latest figures from Wales show more people than ever - the equivalent of 18% of the population - are waiting for planned treatments. Ms Morgan said, "I am very aware that there are literally hundreds of thousands of people across Wales who are suffering and are in pain and it is our responsibility to move as fast as we can to try and relieve that suffering. But it is going to be, I'm afraid, a task that is going to take a substantial amount of time." To tackle the vast backlog, the Welsh government today announced a record £100 million in additional funding.

Lookahead: 21st May – 3rd June

25th May

9:25am

Westminster Hall Debate - Oral health and dentistry in England
Mohammad Yasin MP

25th May

9:30am

Health and Social Care Committee - Oral Evidence Session

Children and young people's mental health, Supporting those with dementia and their carers

Witnesses: Kamena Dorling - Head of Policy and Advocacy at Article 39; Saffron Cordery - Deputy CEO and Mental Health Lead at NHS Providers; Bernadka Dubicka - Chair of the Children and young people's faculty at Royal College of Psychiatrists; Julie Bentley - CEO at Samaritans; Steve Mallen - Co-founder at Zero Suicide Alliance; Louis Appleby - Professor of Psychiatry and National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health at University of Manchester; Mark Rowland - CEO and member of National Suicide Prevention Strategy Advisory at Mental Health Foundation; Helen Whately MP - Minister of State for Care at Department of Health and Social Care; Tom Surrey - Director of Adult Social Care Policy at Department of Health and Social Care.

27th May

House of Lords, Short Debate

Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on people with neurological conditions and their access to health and care services; and the steps being taken to restart specialist neurology services

Relevant Select Committee Inquiries that are currently open

- **Public Accounts Committee** - [Digital Transformation in the NHS](#)
- **Public Accounts Committee** - [NHS nursing workforce](#)
- **Public Accounts Committee** - [Adult social care markets](#)
- **Health and Social Care Committee** - [Social Care: funding and workforce](#)
- **Health and Social Care Committee** - [Workforce burnout and resilience in the NHS and social care](#)
- **Health and Social Care Committee** - [Coronavirus: lessons learnt](#)
- **Health and Social Care Committee** - [Coronavirus: recent developments](#)
- **Health and Social Care Committee** - [Department's White Paper on health and social care](#)
- **Health and Social Care Committee** - [Treatment of autistic people and individuals with learning disabilities](#)
- **Health and Social Care Committee** - [Safety of maternity services in England](#)
- **Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee** - [Long term funding of adult social care](#)
- **COVID-19 Committee** - [The long-term impact of the pandemic on parents and families](#)

Relevant Consultations that are currently open

- **Department of Health and Social Care** - [Improving Health and Wellbeing of Women in England](#)
- **Department of Health and Social Care** - [Regulating healthcare professionals, protecting the public](#)

Upcoming events

- **Tuesday 25th May - Health Foundation** - [Webinar: Can politicians 'get social care done'?](#)
- **Tuesday 25th May - King's Fund** - [Using digital solutions to transform the delivery of care](#)
- **Wednesday 26th May - NHS Confederation** - [NHS Reset: Ensuring a greener future for respiratory care](#)

- **Thursday 27th May - Westminster Health Forum** - Use of artificial intelligence in healthcare - opportunities, support, implementation, ethics, safeguarding, data, and engagement with clinicians and patients