

NHS Reform Fortnightly Update

15th July 2021

Retrospective report: 1st July – 15th July

1 July

On 1st July, the government announced the [launch](#) of a new NHS Digital Weight Management Programme – backed by £12 million of government funding – which will offer free, online support via GP and primary care referrals for adults living with obesity. Alongside this, the government has announced £30 million of new funding to councils across England to roll out expanded management services for adults living with obesity.

Obesity continues to be one of the biggest health crises facing the country, with almost two-thirds of adults in England living with excess weight or obesity. The Programme will be a key part of the Office for Health Promotion (OHP), due to be launched later this year, which will lead national efforts to “level up” the health of the nation.

8 July

On 8th July, MPs [debated](#) the implementation of the recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review, also known as the Cumberlege Review. During the debate, MPs criticised the Government for failing to take action a year on from the inquiry that exposed avoidable harm to tens of thousands of women and babies. MPs called for all of the recommendations to be implemented without delay, including financial redress for women and calls for a retrospective audit of mesh to work out the number of women suffering. Many MPs acknowledged that a patient safety commissioner will now be appointed as recommended by the review, but called on the government to appoint someone as soon as possible. The Minister for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health, Nadine Dorries MP, explained more about the role of the patient safety commissioner, saying that it will ‘*promote the safety of patients who use medicines and medical devices by ensuring that the views of the wider public about them are heard.*’

8 July

NHS figures [published](#) on 8th July revealed that the number of people waiting longer than 18 and 52 weeks to begin non-urgent treatment has fallen significantly, despite record numbers of people attending A&E in June. Figures showed that patients waiting longer than 18 weeks for elective care dropped by more than 800,000 while those waiting more than a year fell by 50,000 for the second month in a row. New analysis also showed that seven cancer patients have started their treatment for every one Covid-19 patient being admitted to hospital in April and May. NHS Medical Director, Professor Stephen Powis, called the news “*reassuring*”.

9 July

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) launched a [consultation](#) on aligning the upper age exemption for NHS prescription charges with the State Pension age (SPA). In 2019, around £600 million was generated in revenue from prescription charges for frontline NHS services. Currently, people receive free prescriptions when they turn 60 in England, whereas the SPA is now 66.

The consultation is seeking views from the public and healthcare professionals on options for change including building in a period of protection so those aged between 60 to 65 can continue to benefit from free prescriptions if the upper age exemption rises.

14 July

On 14th July, the [Health and Care Bill](#) passed its Second Reading (first debate) in the House of Commons. The Bill includes measures to establish existing Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) on a statutory footing, merge NHS England and NHS Improvement, and make changes to procurement and competition rules relating to health services. The Bill also gives the Health Secretary powers to direct NHS England and to decide how some other health services are organised. It also establishes the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch as a statutory body and makes changes to the system of medical examiners. The next stage is Committee Stage, the date of which has not been set but will take place in September once Parliament is back from recess.

15 July

Earlier today, the government [announced](#) the launch of a selection process for eight new hospitals to be built in England. The announcement forms part of the biggest hospital building programme in a generation, which will see forty new hospitals built across the UK by 2030, backed by an initial £3.7 billion of investment. Expressions of interest are invited by September from all mental health, community and acute NHS trusts who wish their plans to be considered. Later this year there will be a more detailed second stage process for long-listed schemes, with a final decision expected in spring 2022. Health Minister Edward Argar said: *"As we build back better from the pandemic, we are offering 8 more trusts the chance to benefit from this historic undertaking. I look forward to seeing how our 40 new hospitals will apply lessons learned from COVID-19 and future-proof hospital design and construction."*

Lookahead: 16th July – 29th July (*Parliament is in recess from 22 July-6 September*)

16 July

11 am

[Elderly Social Care \(Insurance\) Bill](#) - Second Reading

19 July

4:30pm

[Westminster Hall Debate on e-petition 317336](#) relating to cervical screening

20 July

9:30am

[Health and Social Care Committee: General Practice Data for Planning and Research](#)

Witnesses: **Professor Sir Martin Landray**, Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology & Deputy Director of Oxford University's Big Data Institute at University of Oxford; **Nicola Perrin**, Director of policy and public affairs at Association of Medical Research Charities; **Phil Booth**, Coordinator at medConfidential; **Lord Bethell**, Minister at DHSC; **Simon Madden**, Director of Policy & Strategy at NHSX, **Simon Bolton**, Interim CEO at NHD Digital; **Dr Nicola Byrne**, National Data Guardian at National Data Guardian for Health and Care

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](#)
- **Public Accounts Committee** - [COVID-19: Government procurement and supply of personal protective equipment](#)
- **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](#)
- **Health and Social Care Committee** - [Supporting those with dementia and their carers](#)
- **Health and Social Care Committee** - [General Practice Data for Planning and Research](#)
- **Health and Social Care Committee** - [Cancer Services](#)
- **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** - [Standard adult ready-to-drink oral nutritional supplements: ACBS policy](#)
- **Department of Health and Social Care** - [The appointment and operation of the Patient Safety Commissioner](#)

- **Department of Health and Social Care** - [Aligning the upper age for NHS prescription charge exemptions with the State Pension age](#)
- **Department of Health and Social Care** - [Changes to giving free prescriptions to people aged 60 and over](#)
- **Public Health England** - [Community Health and Wellbeing Worker: employer demand scoping](#)

Upcoming events

- **Tuesday 20th July:** Westminster Health Forum - **[Priorities for the UK life sciences sector - policy, regulation, growth, competitiveness, research, innovation, and learning from the experience of the pandemic](#)**
- **Tuesday 27th July:** NHS Confederation - **[Making sense of integrated care systems \(ICs\)](#)**