

NHS Reform Fortnightly Update

21st October 2021

Retrospective report: 8th October – 21st October

9 October

According to an [article](#) in *The Guardian*, ministers are being warned of a mounting workforce crisis in England's hospitals, with one in five nursing posts on some wards now unfilled. The latest NHS workforce figures reveal there are about 39,000 vacancies for registered nurses in England, with one in 10 nursing posts unfilled on acute wards in London and one in five nursing posts empty on mental health wards in the south-east. Hospital leaders in the most affected areas have said the situation has been exacerbated by a collapse in the number of recruits from Europe. Patricia Marquis, England director for the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), said: "There just aren't enough staff to deliver the care that is needed, and we now have a nursing workforce crisis. We should never have got into a position where we were so dependent on international nurses. We are on a knife-edge."

10 October

The Telegraph [reports](#) that the Health Secretary is setting up an 'NHS delivery unit' to oversee an efficiency drive in the health service, amid concerns surrounding the impending Health and Social Care Levy, which will see national insurance contributions rise by 1.25%. According to the article, a team of officials is being established to help ensure that the increase is not wasted. The disclosure comes as Nikki da Costa, former government head of legislative affairs, warned that the Conservatives only have "two final years to set the scene for electoral success". Last month, a group of Conservative MPs expressed frustrations over the government's failure to secure new commitments from NHS England to demand the increased availability of face-to-face GP appointments in return for the recent funding settlement.

14 October

The NHS, working closely with the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) published its [blueprint](#) for increasing the capacity of GP surgeries to provide face-to-face appointments for patients, whilst also supporting GPs and their teams. Surgeries are to be provided with additional funding to boost capacity, whilst also increasing capacity to provide urgent same-day care. Additional steps to be taken aim to "address variation and encourage good practice" and "improve communication with the public", including tackling abuse and violence against NHS staff. The measures will be deployed through a £250 million winter access fund from NHS England, in addition to the £270 million invested over the previous 11 months to expand capacity and support GPs. Secretary of State, Sajid Javid, added that the package aims to enhance transparency and accountability of GP practice, by committing to publishing GP appointment data at practice level by spring next year.

18 October

According to the *The Health Service Journal*, the Chair of NHS England, Lord Prior, is to [stand down](#) from his role early next year. A former Conservative health minister, as well as a former chair of the Care Quality Commission and Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals Foundation Trust, Lord Prior was described by an internal NHS England announcement as having “championed the life sciences agenda at a time when Britain has led the world in developing COVID therapies and vaccines”. Before the announcement, at the NHSE/I’s joint board meeting last month, Lord Prior asserted that NHS capital and workforce settlements must be prioritised in the government’s forthcoming spending review. His resignation means that recruitment for his replacement will have to begin while the passage of the Health and Care Bill is ongoing.

19 October

The Health and Care Bill Committee had its thirteenth and fourteenth sittings on 19th October. A number of Government amendments were agreed to including Amendment 117, which makes minor changes to clause 79 (which allows the publication of mandatory information standards relating to the processing of information, including its transfer, collection and storage) so that standards may be set for public bodies that exercise functions in connection with the provision of *any* health care in England, and not simply NHS services. A number of SNP amendments, which would ensure that there is recognition in the Bill that there should be both consultation and consent from the devolved administrations on data collection and information systems, were not pushed to a vote after the Minister gave assurances that the Government will work closely with the devolved Administrations to ensure that differences in approach to the use and disclosure of information across the UK are taken into consideration in developing the medicines information system. See the full transcript [here](#). The next Committee sittings take place on 21st October.

21 October

NHS Wales has today [published](#) its Health and Social Care Winter Plan amid warnings from NHS Wales Chief Executive Andrew Goodall that this winter will be “one of the hardest we have ever faced”. The Plan sets out an extra £42 million funding for social care, which will be used to improve hospital patient discharges, expand community services and reduce hospital re-admissions among the most vulnerable. Other key priorities outlined in the Winter Plan include: protecting people from Covid-19 through the vaccination programme, keeping people well during higher levels of influenza and seasonal respiratory viruses, maintaining the resilience of health and social care services and responding to the mental health impact of the pandemic. A further £25 million is being invested to support the transformation of urgent and emergency care services.

Lookahead: 22nd October– 4th November

25 October

House of Lords
Oral Questions - Introduction of a men's health strategy - Lord Farmer

26 October

2:30pm
House of Commons Westminster Hall Debate
GP appointment availability

**26/27/28
October**

Health and Social care Bill Committee sittings to further consider the Bill, which is expected to conclude and report to the House by Tuesday 2nd November

Lookahead: 22nd October– 4th November

27 October

House of Commons
Budget Statement - Rishi Sunak, followed by a debate

27 October

House of Lords
Oral Questions - Proportion of the new Health and Social Care Levy to be allocated to the provision of social care - Lord Wood of Anfield

28 October

House of Lords, 1:00pm
Short Debate - Government assessment of the possible role of the private sector in helping individuals pay for social 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](#)
- Public Accounts Committee - [NHS Backlogs and waiting times](#)
- Public Accounts Committee - [NHS supply chain finance](#)
- Health and Social Care Committee – [Clearing the backlog caused by the pandemic](#)
- 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](#)
- Health and Social Care Committee – [Children and Young People's Mental Health](#)
- Health and Social Care Committee – [NHS Litigation reform](#)
- 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** - [Making vaccination a condition of deployment in the health and wider social care sector](#)
- **Department of Health and Social Care** - [NHS Pension Scheme: proposed changes to member contributions](#)
- **Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency** - [Consultation on the future regulation of medical devices in the United Kingdom](#)
- **Migration Advisory Committee** – [The impact of the ending of freedom of movement on the adult social care sector](#)

Upcoming events

- **Wednesday 27th October:** King's Fund: [The NHS and climate change: moving from policy to action for a sustainable future](#)
- **Monday 1st – Thursday 4th November:** King's Fund: [Integrated care systems and place-based partnerships: six months on \(virtual conference\)](#)
- **Tuesday 2nd November:** Westminster Health Forum: [Priorities for clinical research in the UK - funding, efficiency, and improving patient involvement](#)
- **Tuesday 2nd November:** The Health Foundation: [A radical new vision for social care](#)
- **Tuesday 2nd November:** NHS Confederation: [ICS implementation: Making sense of tackling health inequalities](#)
- **Thursday 4th November:** Westminster Health Forum: [Priorities for women's health - tackling the gender health gap, recovering from COVID-19, promoting women's only health concerns, and opportunities for research](#)