

Action Cerebral Palsy

Political & Parliamentary Monitoring

Week Commencing 9th July 2018

Theresa May has appointed Matt Hancock as the new Health & Social Care Secretary, after a week of political turmoil saw two high-profile cabinet ministers resign from their Cabinet positions in protest over the Prime Minister's approach to negotiating the UK's exit from the European Union. Both Foreign & Commonwealth Secretary, Boris Johnson and David Davis, Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, left Government in protest at the Prime Minister's 'Chequers Agreement' – seen as a more 'soft Brexit' approach than Government had previously suggested.

Matt Hancock has held several ministerial posts within government since being elected to serve the constituents of West Suffolk in 2010, including most recently as Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. In this role he focused heavily on media transformation, even developing his own mobile app. He enters the Department of Health & Social Care at a challenging time, given the Prime Minister's recent commitment to an additional £20 billion of funding for the service, and as NHS leaders now lobby heavily for the extra resources to be funnelled in their direction.

Jeremy Hunt's time as the longest tenured Health Secretary will receive mixed reviews in the coming days and weeks. Hunt oversaw the slowest rate of investment in the health service since 1950s, and angered much of the public when the failure to negotiate a new contract with junior doctors led to strike action.

Overview

- [Report: Children failed at vulnerable point](#)
- [Jab reduces risk of cerebral palsy](#)
- [Government's commitment to inclusion questioned](#)

Children failed at vulnerable point

A new report by the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch (HSIB) has found that many young people experience a difficult transition from child to adult care, at exactly the time when they require the most support.

The [report](#), sparked by the suicide of an 18-year old shortly after moving from child to adult mental health services, has recommended a wider window of transition for young people up to the age of 25,

rather than a ‘cliff-edge’ approach to care which can see a disruptive change from children’s to adult services. The report also recommended that NHS England work with commissioners to ensure that the care of a young person before, during and after transition is shared in line with best practice, including joint agency working. Whilst there was a particular focus on children with mental health issues, given rates of depression or other mental health illnesses are three to four times higher for people with disabilities, it’s important to ensure young people with disabilities such as cerebral palsy have the support they need growing up – including the opportunity to be independent.

The news that large swathes of young people are being failed by their local health authorities is disappointing given it is only two years since NICE issued new guidance on the [transition from children’s to adults’ services for young people](#). In that guidance, NICE emphasised that any transition should not be a “single point of switch over”, adding that whilst most transitions occur around the age of 18, any change should be “developmentally appropriate” and take in to account cognitive abilities and communication needs.

ACP will use the data gathered by its current Freedom of Information audit to contact local MPs and representatives, informing them of gaps in resources and support in their area and offering them the opportunity to meet.

NHS offers jab for mothers-to-be which reduces risk of cerebral palsy

All women who go into labour before 30 weeks will now be given single magnesium sulphate jab, now being rolled out by nationwide by NHS England. The decision follows a pilot at St. Michael’s Hospital, Bristol, and is expected to save thousands of babies from lifelong physical and mental disabilities.

Although researchers cannot be sure, it’s thought the magnesium reaches the baby’s brain through the placenta, where it protects the unborn from toxic chemicals caused by lack of oxygen. The new jab has been heralded by mothers, whilst Professor Tony Young, NHS England’s National Clinical Lead for Innovation, highlighted the innovative simplicity of the injection when he commented that “The latest and greatest innovations in NHS care do not have to be a new gadget or gizmo”.

Magnesium sulphate, if given before the 32nd week of pregnancy, reduces the risk of all grades of brain damage by up to 40 per cent and is even more effective against the most severe form of cerebral palsy, slashing it by 50 per cent.

The new jab is another in a line of recent scientific feats. Hundreds of expectant mothers are currently in the process of testing a jab designed to prevent Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), which can cause breathing complications post-birth. Experts who are developing the RSV jab say its impact could be as great as the pneumococcal vaccine, which has been available since 2006 and slashed cases of meningitis, septicaemia and pneumonia. Children with cerebral palsy, as well as other neuromuscular impairments, tend to fare poorly if they contract RSV. [Research](#) by the University of Bonn last year found that children with neuromuscular impairment suffered a greater rate of seizures.

Whitehouse will monitor any developments, and once findings from the RSV trial are published, encourage that the NICE and the NHS act swiftly to ensure that any vaccine can be made available to expectant mothers as quickly as possible.

Lords question Government's commitment to inclusion

Members of the House of Lords have pushed the Government to explain what steps it is taking to ensure that disabled children are not being unfairly excluded from school.

A week after Baroness Warnock criticised Ofsted for being too focused on the academic rigour of pupils and less on the inclusiveness of the school environment, the Government's representative in the House of Lords was challenged as to indicating whether schools and local authorities were abiding by their duties under the Equality Act. The Act, which became law in 2010, forbids discrimination on the grounds of disability.

Questioning the Government, Lord Touhig asked why no action had been taken on the matter of pupils with learning or physical difficulties being unfairly excluded because they might be considered disruptive. He was joined by other members, who suggested that the Government should have a better training programme for new teachers in place, to ensure they can provide students with the resources and help they need in order to succeed. Indeed, in light of the fact that there has been a 72% increase in the number of exclusions from primary schools, it could be argued that the education system is failing those pupils in need of additional support.

This challenge to the Government's record comes just a week after the Lords tabled a motion for the Government to take note of the challenges faced by disabled people in the United Kingdom in 2018. The Government was challenged by peers to utilise technology to improve the lives of young people living with cerebral palsy, improving communication skills.

ACP will reach out Lord Touhig to share our concerns and invite him to meet.