

Action Cerebral Palsy

Political & Parliamentary Monitoring

Week Commencing 17th September 2018

Former Chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners, Professor Clare Gerada, has said that general practice is a [“complete and utter and total mess”](#) in a speech to the Westminster Health Forum this week. The Former Chair said that over 1,500 GPs had received help from a specialist mental health and addiction service, as stress levels amongst health professionals skyrocket and moral continues to fall.

Professor Gerada said that general practice now resembled something out of the 1970s, when the health service was in crisis, with doctors forced to take on too much, too often. The 1970s crisis was solved by the creation of a GP Charter which outlined the duties and responsibilities that GPs should reasonably take-up. Professor Gerada is now calling for a 21st century GP Charter to be commissioned.

Her other recommendations included reviewing staff contracts, which she said were “far too rigid”. Many contracts for general practice outline how many patients should be seen in a particular time-frame, thus preventing doctors from spending more time on those patients which need additional care or have complex medical needs. At the same time, such a rigid view of seeing patients has resulted in a lack of reflection in the profession, with little opportunity for doctors to review recommendations and the decisions they had made.

This news will interest ACP greatly. It is essential to have well-trained and accessible GPs with the ability to diagnose cerebral palsy. Without enough GPs, whether because of stress or other factors, this will impact on the time it takes to receive an official diagnosis. At the same time, it is crucial that GPs have the time and resources to adequately diagnose patients.

Overview

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A&E appointments system proposed in NHS shakeup

Under a proposed shakeup of NHS targets, patients could have to start booking appointments in A&E units, and those with only minor ailments may be forced to wait many hours before being seen, it has been [revealed](#). NHS England chiefs are examining whether to relax the longstanding obligation to see 95% of A&E patients within four hours.

NHS England is reviewing its core service and longstanding targets to see 95% of A&E patients within four hours as part of its forthcoming 10-year plan, which will outline how the organisation will spend the extra £20 billion it is due to receive by 2023. Senior leaders have been looking at case studies and best practice from around Europe, including the Denmark model in which only the most ill patients are expected to ring to make an appointment in A&E. If adopted in England, it could force many of the 22 million visitors to A&E every year to pre-book before arriving.

The Denmark model, which was adopted in 2014, led to complaints that patients faced long delays getting through to phonelines and that some serious injuries and illnesses were misdiagnosed because the assessor had no contact with the patient. Professor Keith Willett, NHS England's Director of Acute Care, supports a move to this system but many A&E staff say it is unclear who would triage and assess patients ringing in. Dr Taj Hassan, President of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine, said he would "very surprised if this worked in the NHS".

Senior NHS leaders have voiced their concerns over the last few months that understaffing, combined with financial problems, meant that many hospitals could no longer meet the four-hour A&E target. Other ideas being put forward include watering down the 18-week target for planned surgery. Chris Hopson, Chief Executive of NHS Providers, which represents NHS trusts, said many hospitals had already downgraded the 18-week target because that was best approach based on medical need.

This will interest ACP because it indicates that the Department of Health and Social Care is thinking boldly about where to invest new funding as part of its forthcoming 10-year plan. Whitehouse will make representations to the NHS's working group overseeing the plan to highlight the need for additional cerebral palsy provisions.

England comes last for teacher satisfaction

New [research](#) by the UCL's Institute for Education has shown that nowhere has worse teacher job satisfaction than England. The study, which compared teaching satisfaction in England with 22 other comparable countries, found that only Latvian, Slovakian and Czech Republican staff felt similar levels

of dissatisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured by combining data from four questions; whether staff enjoyed their work, whether they would recommend their job to others; whether they would like to leave their school; and their level of satisfaction with their working life.

Over 2,500 teachers from England contributed to the [working paper](#), which the research lead Dr Sam Sims branding the results a “real wake-up call”, adding “It is not surprising that so many teachers are leaving the profession when morale is this low”. The study found that countries with much higher rates of teacher job satisfaction had less paperwork and red tape to do. Countries with “much higher” rates of teacher job satisfaction included: Australia, Denmark, Sweden, Georgia, Italy and Norway amongst others.

The paper comes after the OECD published data last week showing that teachers in England had suffered the second biggest real-term pay cut in the developed world, with pay falling on average by 10 per cent between 2005 and 2017. The news also comes on the same day that teachers in Scotland [rejected](#) a 3 per cent pay increase, describing the offer as “derisory”. Whilst Scotland’s teacher satisfaction rate was not mentioned in this study, rejecting the pay offer highlights the increased tension being experienced across the UK between the workforce and the Government over pay and conditions.

This news will interest ACP given the current rise in the number of vacancies, including in the number of specialist teachers entering the profession. When communicating with MPs and Parliamentary stakeholders, Whitehouse will make sure to mention concerns about the rise in teaching vacancies, as well as making sure teachers have appropriate training.

Early years workforce facing ticking timebomb

The Education Policy Institute has found that the Early Years and nursing sector is facing a “ticking timebomb” with staff shortages and a falling number of professionals taking new qualification crippling the industry. In a set of predictions for the Nursery sector, the EPI found that four-fifth of Early Years staff will not be working towards a higher qualification level.

Sar Bonetti, the author of the [report](#), said that one in five staff qualified at Level 6 or higher are aged over 50 and will be approaching retirement within the next ten to fifteen years. If this trend continues, by 2023 over 80 per cent of the group-based staff will not be working towards a higher qualification level. At the same time, by 2023 the number of unpaid staff will have risen to 13 per cent of the workforce.

This study comes at a time when the Government is under pressure to put in place plans to grow the graduate workforce. Highly-qualified staff are key to raising childcare quality and giving children the best start in life. In response to the study, the Government said that it was investing a record amount in childcare, with an estimated £6 billion to be spent each year by 2020. The Social Mobility Action Plan, announced at the beginning of the year, will also mean an additional £20 million will be spent supporting quality improvement in pre-reception nursery settings.

This news will interest ACP members, as any fall in the number of qualified nursing staff will no doubt impact on the detection rates for cerebral palsy, as it will often be well-trained staff who are able to identify the possible signs of cerebral palsy. It will also be of interest given ACP's campaign to increase teacher training more broadly.