

Action Cerebral Palsy

Political & Parliamentary Monitoring – Week commencing 26th March 2018

This week, Prime Minister, Theresa May, has committed to developing a “sustainable long-term plan” for NHS funding and has called for funding to be injected into the Health Service promptly, saying that we cannot afford to wait until a review to increase its funding. She has been supported by Health & Social Care Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, who has called for a ten-year NHS funding cycle.

The Nursing & Midwifery Council has published revisions to the draft standards it wrote last year and ahead of consulting on them next month. It said that, when originally publishing the standards, it caveated it with saying they might change, and did so early only to help universities to adjust their training programmes to meet them.

Medway Community Healthcare has been appointed to provide all NHS and council commissioned children’s community services in Medway. The announcement was delayed because of changes to the design of the brief, but the contract will start on 1st April and the transfer will be completed by 1st June.

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Government indicates support for ten-year NHS funding cycle

The Health and Social Care Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, has called for the Government to agree a [ten-year funding settlement for the NHS](#), in a significant intervention which criticised the “crazy” funding decisions for healthcare which have been taken up to now. Hunt said that NHS funding had been a case of “feast or famine” for the past two decades and suggested that the Government should consider “innovative forms of taxation”. In [HSJ’s reporting on the remarks](#), it was noted that Hunt said large funding growth in some years had been “wasted” on IT and PFI projects and that he “wanted to see that money going in but to know every pound is being spent wisely.”

Hunt's comments lend support to the argument for a ringfenced NHS tax, as he stated that the public "are very clear they want to know that money is actually going into the health and social care system." However, commentators from the King's Fund and the Institute of Fiscal Studies warned that this could result in funding being restricted during an economic downturn or recession if tax revenues fell.

Hunt's intervention was accompanied by a [letter from 98 cross-party figures](#), including 21 Select Committee Chairs, calling for the Government to create a commission to examine health and social care funding. The Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, Sarah Wollaston, said "on behalf of all those who rely on services, we need to break down the political barriers and to agree a way forward." The signatories suggested that a commission could make recommendations by Easter 2019. However, the Shadow Health Secretary, Jonathan Ashworth, argued that the Government could choose to increase NHS funding without the motivation of a cross-party commission, arguing that Gordon Brown "more than trebled the NHS budget in cash terms when we had a Labour government. We didn't need a parliamentary talking shop to come up with that."

Prime Minister, Theresa May, speaking to the Commons Liaison Committee, pledged to developing a "sustainable long-term plan" for the NHS backed up by "a multi-year funding settlement" to empower it "to plan for the future." She also called for the money to be delivered to the NHS expediently, saying that "I would suggest we can't afford to wait until Easter." Responding to this, Mr Ashworth has [said](#), "Now the Prime Minister must put her money where her mouth is."

Hunt's bold call for a ringfenced health and social care tax should be considered in the context of his rumoured ambitions to bid for the Conservative Party leadership once Theresa May steps down. Following his polarising tenure as Health Secretary, Hunt will likely feel the need to change public opinion on his record if he is to make a leadership bid. While he has acted as a loyal servant on NHS funding and pay restraint policies under David Cameron and Theresa May, last week's intervention suggests the Surrey MP is finally willing to offer more creative – and politically moderate – solutions to difficulties over health and social care finances.

It also appears as though Hunt will shortly see results from his intervention, following the Prime Minister's acceptance of the need for a "multi-year settlement". The Government was already due to outline a new comprehensive spending agreement for the NHS in 2018, and this looks likely to come sooner rather than later.

NMC publishes draft nursing associate standards

It has been [reported](#) in the *Nursing Times* that the Nursing and Midwifery Council has updated its standards for nursing associates including a list of skills they should be trained in. The standards were first published last year to give universities time to adjust their teaching programmes. The standards are due for consultation on 9th April. The requirements include nurses being able to recognise signs of allergy, sensitivity and adverse reaction and have an understanding of the different ways in which medicines can be prescribed.

Although the standards maintain that nurses need to be able to administer medication through oral, topical and inhalation routes, and through subcutaneous and intradermal injections, they no longer need to be able to do so through the rectum. They have also omitted the requirements on inserting and removing oral and nasal gastric tubes, catheters for all genders, the administration of intramuscular medicine and the use of infusion pumps.

An NMC spokesperson said: “We took the exceptional step of issuing an early working draft of the nursing associate proficiencies, accepting that they may change before and after consultation. This has given providers the best possible opportunity to prepare their students for the standards we are likely to set. We have engaged widely and the latest version has moved on. Subject to council approval, our formal consultation will open in April and people can tell us what they think.”

Social enterprise takes over children’s services contract

A social enterprise has won the contract to provide all NHS and council commissioned children’s community services in Medway. Medway Community Healthcare will run 19 different services and will run for four years at a value of £10.5m a year, taking services over gradually, with council services being transferred on 1st April through to CCG services scheduled to be transferred on 1 June. Medway Community Healthcare is already involved in the management of some of the provisions in the area.

Stuart Jeffery, Chief Operating Officer at Medway CCG, said: “Having a single point of access to all children’s community health services and advice should simplify the system and enable children and young people to achieve the best possible health outcomes. More and more services will be delivered in the community rather than in hospitals which fits with the Medway model, a new way of joining up local health and care services so that, where appropriate and possible, services can be delivered closer to people’s homes.”

Heidi Shute, Director of Children's Services at Medway Community Healthcare, said: "We are delighted to be able to expand on the children's services we currently provide, bringing together very experienced staff who will now be able to plan around the health needs of families in Medway. Our focus will be on supporting children and families to achieve the outcomes that are most important to them and we look forward to working with schools and other local partners to make this happen."