

## POLICY BRIEF

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny

09 March 2022



The information within this Brief is correct at the time of approval for publication and contains relevant recent announcements made by Government and its departments and regulators.

### GOVERNMENT POLICY, LEGISLATIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS

**Department of Health and Social Care (09/02/2022)** [Patients to receive better care as NHS and social care systems link up](#). The integration white paper sets out a vision for an integrated NHS and adult social care sector which will better serve patients and staff. The white paper sets out some of the ways health and care systems will draw on the resources and skills across the NHS and local government to better meet the needs of communities, reduce waiting lists and help level up healthcare across the country.

**NHS England and NHS Improvement (08/02/2022)** [Delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care](#). The plan sets out a progressive agenda for how the NHS will recover elective care over the next three years. This is in the context of restoring elective performance in the longer term. It explains how the NHS will take the opportunity to capitalise on current success and embed new ideas to ensure elective services are fit for the future. A statement in the House of Commons from Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid can be read [here](#).

This plan sets out a number of ambitions, including:

1. That the waits of longer than a year for elective care are eliminated by March 2025. Within this, by July 2022, no one will wait longer than two years, we will aim to eliminate waits of over 18 months by April 2023, and of over 65 weeks by March 2024. Long-waiting patients will be offered further choice about their care, and over time, as the NHS brings down the longest waits from over two years to under one year, this will be offered sooner.
2. Diagnostic tests are a key part of many elective care pathways. Our ambition is that 95% of patients needing a diagnostic test receive it within six weeks by March 2025.
3. The NHS has continued to prioritise cancer treatment throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and we have consistently seen record levels of urgent suspected cancer referrals since March 2021. To maintain this focus, our ambition is that, by March 2024, 75% of patients who have been urgently referred by their GP for suspected cancer are diagnosed or have cancer ruled out within 28 days. This will help contribute to the existing NHS Long Term Plan ambitions on early diagnosis. Local systems have also been asked to return the number of people waiting more than 62 days from an urgent referral back to pre-pandemic levels by March 2023.
4. For patients who need an outpatient appointment, the time they wait can be reduced by transforming the model of care and making greater use of technology. We will work with patient groups and stakeholders to better monitor and improve both waiting times and patients' experience of waiting for first outpatient appointments over the next three years.

**Department of Health and Social Care (09/02/2022)** [Government sets out plans for 'My Planned Care'](#). Patients waiting for elective surgeries will benefit from increased transparency and information sharing following the launch of the new NHS 'My Planned Care' platform. The Government has set out plans for 'My Planned Care' an online platform to provide information and support to patients waiting for elective surgeries.

**Department of Health and Social Care (04/02/2022)** [Health and Social Care Secretary to launch new 10-year 'national war on cancer'](#). Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid will launch a call for evidence to underpin an ambitious 10-Year Cancer Plan for England. The plan will build on the NHS Long Term Plan with a set of new priorities, which include:

- Increasing the number of people diagnosed at an early stage, where treatment can prove much more effective.
- Boosting the cancer care workforce.
- Tackling disparities and inequalities, including in cancer diagnosis times and ensuring recovery from the pandemic is delivered in a fair way. For instance, the 'Help Us Help You' cancer awareness campaign will be directed towards people from more deprived groups and ethnic minorities.
- Intensifying research on mRNA vaccines and therapeutics for cancer – this will be achieved through the UK's global leadership and supporting industry to develop new cancer treatments by combining expertise in cancer immunotherapy treatment and the vaccine capabilities developed throughout the pandemic.
- Intensifying research on new early diagnostic tools to catch cancer at an earlier stage.
- Improving prevention of cancer through tackling the big known risk factors such as smoking.

A [call for evidence](#) will run until 1st April 2022 with the Cancer Plan expected to be published in the summer. The call for evidence covers topics including cancer treatment, priorities for the cancer plan, and delivering the cancer plan.

**Department of Health and Social Care (04/02/2022)** [Government launches landmark reviews to tackle health disparities](#). Plans to enable people across the country to live longer, healthier lives are moving forward with the government's announcement of leads for 2 significant independent reviews to tackle health disparities. A review into potential ethnic bias in the design and use of medical devices will be led by Professor Dame Margaret Whitehead, professor of public health at the University of Liverpool. Separately, Javed Khan OBE, former CEO of children's charity Barnardo's, will lead an independent review of the government's bold ambition to make England smoke free by 2030.


Both independent reviews will form part of the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities' (OHID) agenda to tackle inequalities in health and care, which will include the publication of the health disparities white paper in spring and the Tobacco Control Plan later in the year.

**Department for Work and Pensions (28/01/2022)** [Government backs vital British Sign Language Bill](#). The government is backing a Bill to make British Sign Language (BSL) a recognised language in the UK and help deaf people play a more prominent role in society.

If passed, it would also see the launch of an advisory board of BSL users to:

- offer guidance to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on how and when to use it
- examine how the DWP goes about increasing the number of BSL interpreters
- make sure the Access to Work scheme better meets the needs of BSL users to support them in employment.

**OPEN CONSULTATIONS AND SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRIES**

Date of publication	Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee	 GOV
11 February	<a href="#">10-Year Cancer Plan: Call for Evidence</a> . This call for evidence will inform the development of the government's 10-year Cancer Plan for England.	Consultation closes 01 April 2022.