

POLICY BRIEF

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny

8 Feb 2023



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

[NHS to expand services to keep vulnerable out of hospital](#) (January 2023)

Elderly and vulnerable people will receive tailored support at home as part of a new NHS plan to improve waiting times for emergency care. Community services including falls and frailty teams will be scaled up, with up to 50,000 people a month supported by clinicians at home in high-tech 'virtual wards'. Urgent community response teams will be scaled up to provide more patients with support at home within two hours, in recognition of the pressures facing A&E. The government and NHS England will publish an Urgent and Emergency Care Plan tomorrow to reduce waiting times and improve care for patients.

[Up to £250 million to speed up hospital discharge](#) (January 2023)

The government has made available up to £200 million of additional funding to immediately buy short-term care placements to allow people to be discharged safely from hospitals into the community where they will receive the care they need to recover before returning to their homes. The fund is designed to increase capacity in post-discharge care and support improved discharge performance, patient safety, experience and outcomes. Through use of this fund, ICBs are expected to deliver reductions in the number of patients who do not meet the criteria to reside but continue to do so, as well as improvements in patient flow which in turn help waiting times in emergency departments and handover delays. This funding should be used to purchase bedded step down capacity plus associated clinical support for patients with no criteria to reside but who cannot be discharged with the capacity available through existing funding routes or the Adult Social Care £500m Discharge Fund announced in November (Below).

[Mental health services boosted by £150 million government funding](#)

The Government has announced that they are investing £150 million of capital funding into NHS mental health crisis response and urgent and emergency care services up to April 2025. This includes £7 million for the procurement of specialised mental health ambulances, with the remaining £143 million being used to provide new and improve existing mental health crisis response infrastructure, including schemes such as crisis cafes, houses and hubs.

[Adult Social Care Discharge Fund: local authority and Integrated Care Board \(ICB\) allocations](#) (November 2022)

These guidance documents set out the funding allocations for the £500 million Adult Social Care Discharge Fund. Of the funding, 40% (£200 million) will be distributed to local authorities and 60% (£300 million) to Integrated Care Boards (ICBs). Local authorities and ICBs will work together to plan how to spend the money locally. Local areas will be free to spend this money on initiatives which will have the greatest impact in their area on reducing discharges into social care, which in most areas will mean prioritising home care. Funding may also be used to boost adult social care workforce capacity, through staff recruitment and retention where that will help reduce delayed discharges - [Details of £500million discharge fund.](#)

Devon ICB received £5,906,000. Plymouth City Council received £1,070,087.

Workforce Recruitment and Retention Funds: outcomes and findings

The Government made £462.5 million available to local authorities through the Workforce Recruitment and Retention Funds (WRRFs). The first fund was announced on 21 October 2021 (£162.5 million) and the second fund was announced on 10 December 2021 (£300 million). These funds were made available to local authorities to be spent on activities to address workforce capacity pressures in the adult social care sector through recruitment and retention activity between 21 October 2021 and 31 March 2022. They followed the £120 million Workforce Capacity Fund (January to March 2021). (Plymouth £1,605,131)

Summary of Outcomes:

A key source of data for the evaluation came from the monitoring information gathered as part of the final reporting point for the WRRFs.

- Local authorities reported that 23.2 million staff hours were generated by measures supported by the WRRFs.
- Local authorities reported that 109,000 recruits were generated by WRRF measures.
- Local authorities passported the majority of the funds to providers (82.6%), while 14.9% of the total funds was spent directly by local authorities. There was some variation geographically, with local authorities in London spending an average of 28.7% of their allocation directly.

Independent review of integrated care systems

The government has announced a new independent review into oversight of ICSs to reduce disparities and improve health outcomes across the country, following record investment in health and social care. The review will be led by former Health Secretary the Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt who is currently chair of NHS Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board, and will explore how to empower local leaders to focus on improving outcomes for their populations.

GP practice data available for first time

New data published on GP appointments for the first time. This will allow patients to make more informed choices on the GP practice they choose to visit. Data showing detailed appointment waiting times was published for the first time Thursday 24 November 2022.

New measures to improve access to dental care

NHS dentists will now receive fairer payments for delivering complex dental care to incentivise practices to take on high needs patients who require treatment the most. Dentists will also be required to update the NHS website regularly to make it clear which practices are taking on new patients and the services available, improving access.

Government setting up an Elective Recovery Taskforce and new Community Diagnostic Centres

The Department for Health and Social Care has announced that patients will benefit from quicker access to treatment and diagnostic tests following the launch of a new Elective Recovery Taskforce. The taskforce, will bring together a group of experts to work on a series of recommendations which will be put to the government early next year on how the NHS can better commission the independent sector, supporting the NHS to tackle the COVID-19 backlogs.

Patients to carry out health checks in comfort of own home to ease pressure on frontline services

Cornwall has been announced as the first area in England to trial NHS Digital Health Check as part of government plans to digitise existing face-to-face health check.

Plans set out to retain more experienced NHS workforce

Plans have been set out to amend NHS pension rules to retain more experienced NHS clinicians and remove barriers to staff returning from retirement. The government has launched a [consultation](#) on the proposals, building on actions set out in [our plan for patients](#) in September. The consultation closes on 30 January 2023.

[Adult social care workforce retention guide](#)

Skills for Care, the strategic workforce development and planning body for adult social care in England, and Partners in Care and Health, a partnership of the Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, have developed a guide - 'top tips for adult social care workforce retention'.

[Hewitt review: call for evidence](#)

The government has announced a call for evidence to gather views from across the health and social care system, as well as from patients, the public, and the wider voluntary sector to inform the Hewitt Review of the oversight and governance of integrated care systems (ICSs). The review will consider how the oversight and governance of ICSs can best enable them to succeed and focus on real time data shared digitally with the Department of Health and Social Care. The consultation closes on the 9 January 2023.

[NHS App hits over 30 million sign-ups](#)

The app, which launched four years ago, was one of the most popular free health apps of 2022 – with more people accessing its range of features, including over 65 million GP record views. The government has already met its target to have 68% of people in England registered with the NHS App by March 2023 and is firmly on track to meet its second target to have 75% of people registered by 2024. The app offers a digital front door for interacting with the NHS and has seen a host of new features launched in the last 12 months – empowering patients to access services from the comfort of their homes.

[New funding announced to increase the number of life-saving defibrillators by at least 1,000.](#)

The Department of Health and Social Care will invest the funding through an independent partner in the new year who will manage grant applications from bidding organisations. Those selected will be asked to match the funding they receive fully or partially, potentially doubling the number of new defibrillators created by the fund.

[New hiring toolkit supports care providers with safer recruitment](#)

A collaboration between safeguarding experts has led to the publication of a best practice recruitment resource for the social care sector.

[New breast cancer screening units to speed up diagnosis](#)

The government has pledged an additional £10 million to deliver 29 new breast cancer screening units, 58 remote access upgrades and nearly 70 life-saving service upgrades to speed up diagnosis and treatment.