

POLICY BRIEF

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny

December 2024



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

[Government issues rallying cry to the nation to help fix NHS](#)

A national conversation about the future of the NHS has been launched, as the entire country is called upon to share their experiences of our health service and help shape the government's 10 Year Health Plan. Members of the public, as well as NHS staff and experts, will be invited to share their experiences, views and ideas for fixing the NHS via the [Change NHS online platform](#), which will be live until the start of next year, and available via the NHS App. The government wants to:

- deliver plans for new neighbourhood health centres, which will be closer to homes and communities.
- create a more modern NHS by bringing together a single patient record, summarising patient health information, test results, and letters in one place, through the NHS App.
- shorten the amount of time people spend in ill health and prevent illnesses before they happen.

[Better care for mental health patients under major reforms](#)

A new Mental Health Bill, introduced to Parliament, aims to modernise mental health legislation and give patients sectioned under the Mental Health Act more dignity and say over their care. A [fact sheet](#) can be found here and an [easy read](#) version of the bill is also available.

[Smoking ban introduced to protect children and most vulnerable](#)

The government will introduce plans for tougher action to protect people from the harms of smoking in the Tobacco and Vapes Bill. The Bill will include measures to create a smokefree generation, phasing-out the sale of tobacco products across the UK to anyone aged 15 or younger this year, breaking the cycle of addiction and disadvantage. In addition, the government will be given powers to extend the indoor smoking ban to specific outdoor spaces: with children's playgrounds, outside schools and hospitals all being considered, subject to consultation.

[Secretary of State pledges to contain NHS agency spend](#)

Wes Streeting has set out plans to clamp down on temporary workers in his speech at the NHS Providers conference. Under joint plans to be put forward for consultation, NHS trusts could be banned from using agencies to hire temporary entry level workers in band 2 and 3, such as healthcare assistants and domestic support workers. Also, agencies could be banned from re-introducing NHS workers that leave permanent jobs.

The Health and Social Care Secretary has also [announced](#) that Senior NHS managers who fail to improve patient care could be denied pay rises and a new pay framework for Very Senior Managers (VSMs) will be published before April 2025. [NHS league tables](#) will be introduced, with top talent attracted to most challenging areas and persistently failing managers to be sacked.

[Tackling modern slavery in NHS procurement: proposed regulations and guidance](#)

Proposed new measures would legally require public bodies procuring goods and services for the NHS to both identify and mitigate risks of modern slavery. Government is inviting views on the draft National Health Service (Procurement, Slavery and Human Trafficking) Regulations 2024 and accompanying guidance. The consultation closes on 13th February 2025.

The government's vision for adult social care

The Minister of State for Care delivered a keynote speech at the National Children and Adult Services Conference in Liverpool.

New protections for whistleblowers under NHS manager proposals

The Department of Health and Social Care announced new proposals to protect NHS whistleblowers. These include holding NHS managers accountable and banning those who commit serious misconduct.

A public [consultation](#) has been launched on these proposals and seeking views on the regulation of health service managers. The consultation closes on 18 February 2024.

Unpaid carers supported by £22.6 million investment in innovation

£22.6 million invested in innovative projects across the country to support unpaid carers as well as people with care needs. Money will be released through the Accelerating Reform Fund (ARF) to support successful schemes run by local authorities. They include new ways to identify and recognise unpaid carers to ensure nobody is left behind, digitising carers' assessments so that they are easier to access and setting up carers' support services in hospitals.

New data laws unveiled to improve public services and boost UK economy by £10 billion

A new bill to unlock the secure and effective use of data for the public interest has been introduced into Parliament. The Data Use and Access Bill will unlock the secure and effective use of data for the public interest, without adding pressures to the country's finances. The measures will be central to delivering three of the five Missions to rebuild Britain, set out by the Prime Minister:

1. kickstarting economic growth
2. taking back our streets
3. and building an NHS fit for the future