



NHS Newsweek 11/06/10

Liaison's significant success with Staff Agency Reviews

Over the past few months Liaison has added Staff Agency reviews to our suite of forensic services with significant success. Staff Agency spend within the NHS is in excess of £1 billion per annum and with the NHS organisations facing significant financial constraints, this new cash recovery service represents much needed support. Since introducing the staff agency review service to the NHS, Liaison's consultants have already identified areas of overcharging to the value of half a million pounds. As with all Liaison services our Staff Agency Review is delivered on a contingent basis, removing the risk of any unnecessary costs. If you would like to find out more about Liaison's services we are exhibiting at the NHS Confederation Conference in Liverpool between 23-25 June and again at the HFMA PCT and Foundation Trust conferences in Birmingham the following week. Our Directors will be happy to discuss all our services with you at any of these events.

Source of Extract: Liaison

Our NHS trust is 'one of the best'

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust has been named as one of the best in the UK for its quality care. The 2010 award comes from one of the country's leading independent providers of healthcare data and quality improvement services. The CHKS 40 top hospital awards, which recognise excellence, were started 10 years ago – and South Tyneside has finished in the top tier six out of the past seven years.

Source of Extract: The Shields Gazette

Residents urge Times: Fight for our Hospital

Furious patients have urged the Bexley Times to fight on for vital A& E services at Queen Mary's Hospital, fearing the Conservatives' pre-election promises to reopen it will not happen. The Conservatives promised to reopen the hospital unit in Sidcup, which closed temporarily during the night last September and which is due to be axed permanently this September. However, Department of Health chiefs in the new coalition government can still not confirm if the future is safe for the much needed unit.

Source of Extract: Bexley Times

'Op death' centre firm likely to lose contract

A private firm is likely to lose its contract to run a West Yorkshire NHS treatment centre where a lecturer's operation went fatally wrong. The centre came under fire from a coroner and politicians following the death of John Hubley, from Leeds. He died in 2007 after suffering "torrential bleeding" during keyhole gallbladder surgery at Eccleshill NHS Treatment Centre, Bradford. The centre, run by Nations Healthcare, is paid by the NHS to do thousands of routine operations for Leeds and Bradford patients. The contract with Nations ends this month but it is unlikely to be re-awarded to the firm. Instead Care UK, which runs 10 NHS treatment centres across the country, has been awarded "preferred bidder status".

Source of Extract: Yorkshire Evening Post

4000 NHS jobs to be axed in Scotland

Almost 4000 jobs are to be axed from the NHS in Scotland this year. More than 1500 nursing and midwifery posts will disappear in the money-saving cull and there will be 68 fewer doctors. Every regional health board in the country intends to squeeze the workforce by next April, except for NHS Orkney and NHS Western Isles. The loss of 4000 staff from the 130,000 workforce equates to a 2.8% reduction.

Source of Extract: Herald

GP polysystem plans axed

PCTs are already scrapping plans for GP polysystems following health secretary Andrew Lansley's decision to shelve massive shifts of hospital care to GPs. A number of trusts have ordered a stop to plans, pending further consultation with local clinicians and patients. But there is still confusion over what constitutes GP consultation, with some trusts insisting the co-operation of local commissioning groups is enough. Among trusts pledging to alter existing plans were NHS Milton Keynes and NHS Hillingdon, which said its plan was under review. But NHS Westminster will continue with plans drawn up 'in close liaison' with PBC leads.

Source of Extract: Pulse

Monitor chair wants FTs off public balance sheet

Steve Bundred has told HSJ foundation trusts' assets and liabilities should now be taken off the public sector balance sheet. In 2002, then Chancellor Gordon Brown, the leading Cabinet critic of separating hospitals from state control, was perceived to have won a victory when Tony Blair ruled foundations would be kept on the government's books. Mr Bundred said changing this would give foundations more freedom because the Treasury and Department of Health - no longer counting FTs in their spending - would have no reason to tell them what to do.

Source of Extract: HSJ

Scrap Hinchingsbrooke Hospital franchise plans, says ex-NHS chief

The process of privatising the management of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital has become so flawed that it should be abandoned, according to a former Huntingdonshire NHS chief. Instead of franchising the hospital's management, the Government should be looking for solutions that do not mirror the NHS's current, defective structure, former Huntingdonshire Primary Care Trust chairman Michael Lynch told The Hunts Post. Mr Lynch, whose company, Anglia Health Solutions (AHS), withdrew from what later transpired to be an unsuccessful bid to run the hospital, says the position of Hinchingsbrooke is an example of NHS discrimination against Huntingdonshire.

Source of Extract: The Hunts Post

English NHS likely to achieve £1.5bn underspend

The NHS in England has probably achieved an overall surplus of £1.5bn in 2009/10. Foundation trusts are not included in the figures.

Source of Extract: HFMA

New NHS Scotland 'knowledge bank' launched

An online database that will allow NHS staff to share information has been unveiled by Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon. The Knowledge Network will include a "Google-style" search engine with access to a huge bank of educational resources as well as personal space for employees to gather information. The network will be managed by NHS Education for Scotland (NES). It aims to save staff time and bring online resources together in one place. The Scottish government said the resource did not include access to patients' records but was designed to support the information needs of the health and social care workforce.

Source of Extract: BBC News

NHS Trust spends £40,000 on 'upside down frown' posters

The smiley face pictures, which have been put up at bus shelters, have been described as a "patronising" waste of time. They are supposed to cheer people up and help them "improve and maintain" their mental health on deprived estates. Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust have also created postcards with the same message. Sue Holden, secretary of the Barton Community Association said the campaign was misguided. "I'm not sure it's the right approach. I don't think the campaign is intended to be patronising but it might well be perceived that way," she said. "I think people will think it's all right for them to be happy, they haven't got our problems." Becky Hitch, a health improvement practitioner at NHS Oxfordshire, said they had "targeted" their marketing to help improve peoples' lives - in areas where there are relationship, employment and diet problems.

Source of Extract: Telegraph.co.uk

NHS hospitals face readmissions penalty

State-funded hospitals in England will lose funding for every emergency patient readmitted within a month so as to encourage improvements in medical care, Health Secretary Andrew Lansley said on Tuesday. At present National Health Service (NHS) hospitals are paid for each emergency patient treatment, even if that patient has to return many times. Under Lansley's plans hospitals would get funding only for an emergency patient's first visit, and would receive nothing for further care within the next 30 days.

Source of Extract: Reuters

Millions spent on NHS bonuses in Scotland

Millions of pounds were spent on NHS bonuses in Scotland last year, the Liberal Democrats have said. The party said that answers to Lib Dem freedom of information requests showed a total of £36,969,000 was paid in bonuses to public sector bodies in 2008-09. According to the figures, £26m of this was paid out in NHS bonuses called distinction awards, which are for senior doctors. Other bodies to award bonuses included NHS National Services Scotland with £659,000. The Liberal Democrats called on the Scottish government to get tough on bonuses during the economic crisis.

Source of Extract: HSJ

Anger at £600k for Buckinghamshire NHS obesity surgery

Health chiefs have spent almost £600,000 on weight loss surgery for residents as young as 17. The NHS Buckinghamshire authority spent £586,500 on 69 patients from April 2007 to February 2009. Bosses said the move was vital for the 'severely obese' who cannot lose the weight another way – but a campaign group said there were more pressing NHS concerns. The procedures include gastric banding, where a band restricts food into the stomach, a by-pass and gastrectomies, where all or part of the stomach is removed.

Source of Extract: Bucks Free Press

NHS spending 'will have to be cut' says think tank

The NHS in Scotland will be under pressure in the next few years not only to freeze current levels of spending but to impose real cuts in services, a Scottish think tank has predicted. In a stark message which directly contradicts repeated assurances from politicians that NHS frontline spending can be protected despite the economic downturn, a report from the Edinburgh-based International Futures Forum (IFF) said current levels of spending on health north of the Border are "not sustainable". Indeed, the paper says, the Scottish NHS could face making more cut-backs than its counterpart in England as the impact of the assault on the UK deficit bites. The Scottish government health department has yet to announce its plans for 2011-14, but with cash allocations reduced by 3.4 per cent in cash terms (11.8 per cent in real terms) by 2013-14 compared to 2009-10, it is likely that the NHS in Scotland will be faced with having to make proportionately more efficiency savings and perhaps real cuts during the next few years.

Source of Extract: Times Online

'Best and worst' English NHS hospital car parks named

Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals Trust clamped 1,671 cars and made £1,851,271 profit from its car park in one year, according to research identifying the UK's worst NHS hospital car parks. The Trust is one of four that Which? has named as the biggest offenders for clamping, fining, charging and generating complaints from patients and those visiting them. The consumer body discovered that Leeds General Infirmary issued 10,330 fines generating £142,000 from April 2008 to April 2009, Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals NHS Trust has the highest minimum charge at £4 for two hours of parking, while the Royal Derby received the most complaints (82). To rank the hospitals Which? judged them against criteria based on capacity, convenience of payment methods, frequency and type of penalties, charging structure and profits, and communication with patients. The hospital deemed the best was the Royal United Hospital Bath, followed by the North Devon District Hospital and the Royal Preston Hospital.

Source of Extract: Guardian.co.uk and BBC News

Lansley to scrap NHS waiting time targets

Waiting time targets, including the four-hour wait in accident and emergency departments, are to be scrapped, Andrew Lansley, the health secretary, signalled on Wednesday as he announced a public inquiry into the scandal-hit Mid-Staffordshire NHS Trust.

Source of Extract: FT.com

Higher spending Scots NHS fails to deliver better results

Higher levels of spending by the NHS in Scotland compared with equivalent health services in England has failed to produce better health outcomes, according to a new report. The findings, published by the Centre for Public Policy for Regions (CPPR), in Glasgow, raise questions over the efficiency of NHS spending in Scotland and echoes reports by the Nuffield Trust and the International Futures Forum which have come to similar conclusions. The report said that spending per head on the Scottish NHS in the past decade has been between 12 to 16 per cent higher, while the numbers of doctors, nurses and other staff are 30 per cent higher north of the Border.

Source of Extract: Times Online

Chair steps down at PCT with £12.8m overspend

A primary care trust under pressure to save £20m this year has lost two members of its board. NHS Peterborough ended March having overspent its £315m budget by £12.8m. This was double the £6.4m deficit it predicted in January, which sparked the resignation of former chief executive Angela Bailey.

Source of Extract: HSJ

NHS 'should share burden of cuts'

A report has called for more than £90 billion reductions in Government spending by 2015, and says the NHS should take its share of the burden of cuts. Author Nigel Hawkins calculates that this would involve reductions in public spending of 3% a year across all Whitehall departments over the next five years - equating to around £20 million a year. He argues that no budget should be ring-fenced and that even the health budget should be subject to an annual reduction of around 2% a year. Further cuts would have to be made within the current year, beyond the £6 billion already announced by Mr Osborne, in order to reach the goal of eliminating the deficit. The report calls for Cabinet ministers to be sacked if they are unable to deliver the necessary savings

Source of Extract: Press Association

Scrap NHS Direct, GPs suggest

Consideration should be given to scrapping NHS Direct as part of a scaling back of health spending, GPs say at their annual conference. The British Medical Association questioned the effectiveness of the telephone service, claiming it delayed patients getting healthcare. They also highlighted spending on new buildings and management as areas for potential savings. But GPs also said possible cuts to community services were a concern. The NHS has been told to find up to £20bn of savings by 2014 even though the health service is due to see rises in its budget in the coming years.

Source of Extract: BBC News

First ISTCs lose activity guarantees

Care UK looks set to secure a 25 year deal on one of its independent sector treatment centres. It plans to operate the centre without a guaranteed activity contract. It is the first time a private provider has agreed to run an independent treatment centre without guaranteed activity levels meaning the centre will entirely depend on the company's ability to attract patients, in line with a government announcement in July 2009. The private provider, which delisted from the stock market on 27 April after a management buyout, is finalising arrangements on a 25 year lease with NHS Derbyshire County to continue operating the Barlborough NHS Treatment Centre, the future of which was in doubt. It has also renewed a contract to continue running the Mid and South Buckinghamshire NHS Diagnostic Centre without an activity guarantee, and has secured preferred bidder status to take over the running of the Eccleshill NHS Treatment Centre from Nations Healthcare.

Source of Extract: HSJ

Watchdog urged to probe cost of out-of-hours cover in rural areas

Scotland's public-sector watchdog is being urged to investigate the true cost of providing out-of-hours GP cover in rural areas. Mid Scotland and Fife Tory MSP Murdo Fraser is to contact Audit Scotland after being petitioned by a constituent in Highland Perthshire. For several years, residents at Kinloch Rannoch have battled to get evening and weekend GP cover restored by NHS Tayside. The lack of provision stems from the 2004 GP contracts which let doctors opt out. NHS Tayside claims this would be too expensive and that suitable alternative arrangements are provided. Residents at Kinloch Rannoch feel lives are being put at risk, however.

Source of Extract: Aberdeen Press and Journal

Axe falls on 470 jobs at hospitals

More than 470 jobs are set to go as a hospital trust swings the axe in a plan to turnaround its financial situation. Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has said that it hopes not to have to make compulsory redundancies and that there are already 320 vacancies across the sites in Ascot and Slough which will contribute towards the posts to be axed. But a trade union representative has called the situation "horrific" and warned that as many as 600 people could be affected and that the local economy could be harmed. The job cuts are part of the trust's 'Getting Better Together' scheme which is a plan devised after it found itself in around £20m worth of debt just over a year ago.

Source of Extract: Bracknell News