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Fears jobs may go as NHS sets aside £2bn 'change' fund

The NHS is bracing itself for a "brutal" round of cuts - and staff fear they are in the firing line. Several major hospitals have already said posts will go and more announcements are expected soon. The BBC has learned a £2bn pot is being set aside in England to pay for one-off costs, such as redundancies and redeployments, to help fund the cuts. Southampton Hospitals Trust is shedding 400 posts this year and 200 next. Meanwhile, Cambridge University Hospitals Trust, which includes Addenbrooke's, and Liverpool's Alder Hey Hospital have both asked staff who want to leave to put themselves forward for a pay-off.

Source of Extract: BBC News

Whitehall bonuses to be slashed by 65% to save £15m

Whitehall and NHS bonuses will be slashed by 65% in a bid to save £15m a year, the new coalition government has pledged. The new Conservative and Liberal Democrat government has said in future bonuses will be restricted to the top 25% of senior civil servants who have performed "exceptionally well". This year, three-quarters of senior civil servants will be paid bonuses but, under Whitehall contracts drawn up by the former government, these bonuses cannot be cancelled by the incoming government. The new Cabinet Office minister Francis Maude said it was right that the most highly paid civil servants "play their part" in reducing the public sector pay bill.

Source of Extract: Personnel Today

NHS Lothian bullish on drug targets

Targets on treating drug addicts will be hit, NHS Lothian has insisted, despite latest figures showing they are still some way off. By December the health board will have to refer everyone who seeks help for addiction within eight weeks of contacting them. And although half of drug users are currently waiting for longer than that, health chiefs said they were on track to meet the Scottish Government goal. Latest figures have shown that around 47 per cent of addicts who want help with their problem have to wait more than eight weeks to see someone. Of those, a large slice are waiting up to 26 weeks, while some are even approaching a year on the waiting list. The position has improved dramatically in the last 12 months, and NHS Lothian's strategic programme manager, Jamie Megaw, said the board is on course to meet the target. He said: "We are confident that we will achieve the drug treatment targets which come into force in December 2010. "We are working together with the Alcohol and Drug Partnerships to improve access and expand our services."

Source of Extract: Scotsman

NHS sets up fund to cover redundancy payouts

The NHS is setting up a £2bn fund to cover redundancy payments as staff brace themselves for job losses that will help the service plug a £20bn financial gap. NHS organisations in England have been told to hold on to 2% of this year's budget, so that the money saved can be spent on one-off projects, such as retraining, setting up new

services or making redundancies. The prospect of reducing staff numbers is looming large, despite all three parties pledging that frontline services will be protected as the NHS's budget is tightened.

Source of Extract: The Guardian

UK private hospitals ready for business

Private hospitals are expecting a rise in business if the Conservatives go ahead with their promise to scrap Labour's waiting-time targets. Andrew Lansley, the health secretary, has pledged to scrap Labour's NHS targets, including the maximum 18-week wait for treatment, replacing targets with outcome measures of care. However, without the pressure to keep within limits, "waiting times will go up", according to Jill Watts, chair of the NHS Partners Network. Private hospitals have had a big increase in work paid for by the NHS over the past year or so as the service worked first to hit and then maintain the 18-week promise in England. Last year, some of the bigger private hospital groups had approaching 30%, and in one case more than 40%, of their work from the NHS. But as NHS budgets start to be squeezed, "we are already seeing evidence of people trying to stop work coming to us as a way to solve those financial pressures."

Source of Extract: Financial Times

NHS spending cuts plan could impact super-hospital

Fears have been voiced that Peterborough's new super-hospital might be a victim of health chiefs' plans to cut multi-million pound overspending. The alarm has been sounded after it was revealed that part of NHS Peterborough's business plan to reduce costs by £33million will involve urging GPs to refer fewer patients for hospital care and discourage patients with minor ailments from using the accident and emergency unit. An unexpectedly high number of people using hospital services has been blamed by health chiefs for much of the overspend. Details of the plan will be unveiled at Wednesday's meeting of the NHS Peterborough board when health chiefs will be told that the amount they need to save has jumped from an expected £27million to £33million. And bosses of Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, which will run the £335million super-hospital in Bretton, which opens in November, say they are uncertain about what impact the plan will have on user numbers. The trust relies on income from NHS Peterborough for services commissioned at its hospitals.

Source of Extract: The Telegraph

Health board to axe 1,200 jobs

Worried health workers across Inverclyde are reeling after it emerged NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde will axe more than 1,200 staff. It was revealed in the Scottish Parliament that more than 1,252 workers will be shed by the health board between now and next March as part of a major workforce review - with over half of them nurses and midwives. The shock news has left health staff at places like Inverclyde Royal Hospital fearing for the future. The Scottish Government asked the health board to look at their workforce last month and make future projections. Board bosses have responded with a plan which would see nursing, midwifery and clerical staff numbers hit.

Source of Extract: Greenock Telegraph

More GPs to hold budgets with commercial sector

More GPs to hold budgets with commercial sector under Tory-led Government, health economist forecasts. An increasing number of GPs will hold joint commissioning budgets with large commercial firms under the new coalition Government, a leading health economist has forecast. Zack Cooper, researcher for LSE Health at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and author of a pre-election paper on NHS spending, predicted GPs will increasingly enter into partnerships with the independent sector when the new Tory-led coalition hands them commissioning responsibility. The Tories have pledged to write commissioning responsibility into the GP contract, although the precise nature of how the plans will work following their coalition deal with the Liberal Democrats have yet to emerge.

Source of Extract: Pulse

NHS frontline staff at risk as health trusts face £500m black hole

The NHS is facing an “unprecedented” shortfall of up to £500m in funding this year. Health boards across Wales face the prospect of making huge savings this year to balance the books in a new climate of public spending austerity. Some boards must make £7m of savings a month, prompting concerns that frontline staff, beds and operations could be slashed. But it is understood some health chiefs believe the huge financial challenge could be used as an opportunity to make real changes in the way care is provided and to eliminate waste. Unions have called for new agreements in the face of changes to give staff greater job security. Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, which provides all NHS services in North Wales, faces an £83.7m shortfall, equivalent to 7.12% of its annual budget. Cwm Taf Health Board is continuing to work on its plan to address its predicted £40.5m gap. Cardiff and Vale University Health Board has said it is facing an £87.5m shortfall.

Source of Extract: Wales OnLine

NHS 'needs to do more to encourage whistle-blowing'

The NHS is still not doing enough to encourage a culture of whistle-blowing, a study suggests. A British Medical Journal investigation found the content of many policies was overly cautious and negative after viewing documents from 118 trusts. Some used words such as disciplinary too often, while others did not do enough to stress the ability of staff to go to outside bodies with concerns. The government said it was looking to improve practices.

Source of Extract: BBC News

Staff crisis forces A&E unit to close at night

Fears for frontline NHS services in Scotland increased last night after the revelation that an A&E department has been forced to close its doors because of staff shortages. With rising concerns about the impact of the financial savings being made by health boards, campaigners yesterday expressed astonishment at the news that services are already being hit by workforce pressures. The closure of the unit at the Victoria Hospital in Kirkcaldy will see the A&E shut overnight for at least a week. Opposition MSPs and health groups last night voiced their concern. NHS Fife said the overnight closures – which started on Monday – were due to staff shortages rather than financial pressures. It is the first time Fife has had to introduce the emergency measures.

Source of Extract: Scotsman

NHS explores paying people to become healthier

The NHS is exploring the possibility of using financial incentives to encourage healthier lifestyles. Several areas have already started their own schemes - and the results have given some encouragement. NICE, which advises the NHS in England and Wales, believes they may help tackle obesity, smoking and drinking. It described rewarding lifestyle changes as an "idea whose time has come" but wants to gather more evidence before a formal recommendation.

Source of Extract: BBC News

NHS London reconfiguration to be axed

The government is set to scrap a far-reaching reconfiguration of health services in London, including hospital mergers and closure of A&E units. The plans, which centred on the creation of 'polysystems' and involved hospital mergers and new polyclinics, took some three years to compile and were projected to save £5 billion a year by 2016. They were designed to create a primary-care led NHS in London with fewer, larger hospitals as envisaged by surgeon and former Labour health minister Lord Darzi. Reversing the closure and merger plans has far-reaching implications for the National Programme for IT in the NHS in London. In March, it signed a new deal with BT predicated on the merger programme being carried through - although this looks set to be reviewed by the Treasury as part of its scrutiny of all government spending commitments made since 1 January. The BBC reports that health secretary Andrew Lansley will order NHS London back to the drawing board. During the course of the general election campaign, the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats both gave commitments to reverse planned closures in London. Among the A&E departments threatened were those at Kingston Hospital in south London and the Whittington Hospital in Archway, north London. Lansley said he would scrap the plans "within days" of taking power.

Source of Extract: E-Health Insider

Salford Software builds ID system for NHS trusts

Salford Software has been contracted to build the foundations of a new Identity Management service for a consortium of seven NHS Trusts based in the South East. The trusts, which include Tower Hamlets Primary Care Trust and Barts and The London NHS Trust collectively have around 34,500 users of its IT system, and Salford Software said that its new system will help the trusts to improve data security and reduce their own costs by automating a process handling starters, movers and leavers while restricting access to sensitive areas such as patent data.

Source of Extract: Crain's Manchester Business

NHS management consultancy bill defended

The Southampton University Hospitals Trust who is facing the loss of up to 600 staff has defended its decision to spend £3.4m on management consultants in three years. The Trust said the money had been used to help identify savings, cut waiting times and provide management training. A spokesperson for the Trust said the amount represented only 0.25 per cent of the total spending of £450m a year, and included several different forms of consultancy. It was spent on legal, finance and property expert fees, as well as advice on how to improve efficiency.

Source of Extract: HSJ

Asda to sell cancer drugs at cost price

Asda is to sell cancer drugs on a not-for-profit basis while thousands of NHS patients continue to be denied medicines that are deemed too expensive. The supermarket giant called on other pharmacists to follow its lead and lower the price of all cancer drugs that are prescribed privately, to give patients access to drugs that are not always available.

Source of Extract: Times online

NHS targets may be scrapped within weeks

The new government is considering scrapping controversial waiting times targets this year it is understood. An updated NHS operating framework for 2010-11 is expected to be published in the next two or three weeks, senior NHS sources said. Department of Health officials have been asked to advise on whether the four-hour accident and emergency waiting time target and 18-week referral to treatment target should be dropped, HSJ was told. The A&E target is thought to be most likely to go. They would be removed from the "vital signs" standards NHS organisations are expected to meet. Other targets are expected to stay during this year, the sources said. The operating framework is usually published in November or December for the following financial year.

Source of Extract: HSJ

Alex Salmond told to come clean on NHS cuts

Alex Salmond has been challenged to publish full details of massive cutbacks to NHS staffing levels being considered by SNP ministers. Four of Scotland's 14 health boards have so far revealed they plan to axe 4,300 posts, with thousands of nurses and midwives losing their jobs. Iain Gray, Labour's Holyrood leader, called for the immediate publication of the other 10 workforce plans, which have been submitted to Nicola Sturgeon, the health minister, for her approval.

Source of Extract: Telegraph.co.uk

Mergers and acquisitions will make the NHS cost-efficient

Our coalition Government is already developing its recovery plan for the next five years. Its focus will be on where frontline services can be realigned while it attempts to ensure that quality does not suffer, although ultimately some cuts to frontline services are inevitable. It is likely that no service within the NHS will be untouched by consolidation and redesign and, on a regional level, this will depend on local drivers for change in efficiency and on the way that services are provided. Many mergers and reorganisations have, unfortunately, had limited impact and their use needs to be properly planned. The overriding premise should be the creation of stable, long-term organisations that are capable of delivering sustainable clinical change that is underpinned by financial viability.

Source of Extract: Times online