



NHS Newsweek 25/03/10

Health Secretary announces new Wynyard Park development.

Health Secretary Andy Burnham gave the go-ahead for a £464m hospital in the region. The long-awaited decision ended speculation that the Wynyard Park project, north of Stockton, might become a victim of the expected public spending cuts. The move will mark a significant break from the past, with many services moving out of a hospital environment and into local clinics. It could also be a sign of things to come in the NHS, with calls this week for a cut in the number of hospital beds in England and a shift to community-based services. The development is part of a wider programme of investment, which includes a range of improvements to local services. Other developments include three integrated care centres in Billingham, Hartlepool and Stockton, which will provide more services, including tests, scans, outpatient appointments and treatment. While people in Hartlepool and Stockton will have to travel far to reach the hospital, health bosses have promised to invest £10m to improve transport links.

Source of Extract: Northern Echo

Delays with £12.7bn NHS software program bring it close to collapse

The government's ailing £12.7bn IT programme to overhaul paper-based NHS patient records in England is close to imploding, potentially triggering a deluge of legal claims against the taxpayer running into billions of pounds, which could start to emerge weeks before a general election. Morecambe Bay is intended to be the first acute trust to take a new patient administration software package called Lorenzo, which has been delayed for four years. After a string of missed deadlines, the Department of Health set a deadline of March 2010 for Lorenzo last April. "If we don't see significant progress... then we will move to a new plan for delivering infomatics in healthcare," Christine Connelly, the Department of Health's director general of IT, said at the time. If Lorenzo is not running smoothly at Morecambe Bay in the next two weeks it will send financial shockwaves throughout Labour's National Programme for IT, potentially forcing profits warnings from iSoft and others. It will also be devastating for the Department of Health, which is locked in frantic contract renegotiations with contractors to keep the project alive.

Source of Extract: Guardian

Alcohol questions in A&E could cut £2.7bn NHS bill, say doctors

Alcohol is a factor in 35% of all A&E cases and up to 70% at the weekend, placing a huge burden on the health service. Leading doctors want patients arriving at hospital accident and emergency units to be questioned about their drinking habits in an attempt to cut the NHS's huge bill for treating people with alcohol problems. The British Society of Gastroenterology is urging ministers to make casualty staff go through a one-minute questionnaire with any patient whose condition is likely to be drink-related. Alcohol is a factor in 35% of all A&E cases, and up to 70% of cases at the weekend. NHS spending on treating such people has risen to £2.7bn annually. The BSG, which represents 2,700 doctors specialising in alcohol problems, is to call for every NHS hospital to undertake the Paddington alcohol test, which has been shown to identify heavy drinkers and cut their consumption by up to 43%.

Source of Extract: Guardian

NHS bill for spin rises by £4.8m despite the recession

The Department of Health has doubled its spending on public relations in just two years – despite the recession. The cost of private PR consultants rocketed from £5million in 2007 to £9.8million in 2009. The huge increase is equivalent to paying for 170 nurses earning an average £28,421 salary.

Source of Extract: Mail on Sunday

Pharmacists in Wales 'could help GPs treat ailments'

Community Pharmacy Wales says the NHS could save at least £30m a year, if patients with common ailments were treated by pharmacists and not GPs. Pharmacy-based services for minor health problems are currently available only in Torfaen and Flintshire. The Welsh Assembly Government says it is monitoring their effectiveness. A pharmacy-led service for minor ailments has been running in Torfaen for around two years.

Source of Extract: BBC

Funding boost for NHS Scotland

Capital funding of over £557 million for NHS buildings and the upgrade of equipment and IT systems in Scotland, was announced this week. Health Boards across Scotland will share £303 million in 2010-11 to build new fit-for-purpose facilities and to improve those that already exist. In addition to their share of funding, NHS Special Boards will receive £49.74 million for key developments including the vehicle and defibrillator replacement programmes for the ambulance service and the redevelopment of the State Hospital.

Source of Extract: OnMedica

NHS target for A&E treatment 'risks patient safety'

Doctors say a key NHS target - to treat people visiting accident and emergency units within four hours - is compromising care and patient safety. The College of Emergency Medicine says the target, at English hospitals, puts staff under "incredible pressure". It says it supports having a target in principle, but that doctors sometimes need time to make the right decision. The government says safety and good quality care should always take priority over targets. The NHS target in England to deal with patients in A&E within four hours has been highly controversial. Critics say it forces clinical staff to put deadlines before quality of care.

Source of Extract: BBC News

Management cull as NHS Direct expands cuts to £28m

NHS Direct has announced new plans for cuts, taking the total revealed over the past few weeks to a massive £28m. The trust is to axe at least 25 managers and slash the number of its call centre staff, while patients will be forced to make more use of alternative 'self-assessment' services on the internet. NHS Direct revealed new proposals for £20m cuts in the next financial year alone. Pulse revealed earlier this month that the NHS Direct board had agreed plans for £8m of cuts in its management budget by the end of March 2011.

Source of Extract: Pulse

Monitor appoints high profile chair

Departing Audit Commission Chief Executive Steve Bundred is to be appointed Chair of Monitor. Mr Bundred announced he was leaving the Audit Commission, where he has been since 2003, in November. He made waves last year when he was the first senior public servant to articulate the impact of the financial crisis on the public sector. Prior to his Audit Commission job he was Chief Executive of the Improvement and Development Agency, and previously of Camden Borough Council.

Source of Extract: HSJ

Hospital beds in Wigton will be slashed

The number of beds for in-patients at Wigton Community Hospital will be cut from 35 to 19 from April. Health chiefs say the changes will help safeguard community hospitals and provide more care for patients in their own homes. The cuts come as part of NHS Cumbria's Closer to Home strategy, a programme of changes to community hospitals throughout the county. Eveline Dugdale, Wigton Hospital League of Friends Chairman, said the changes would help the hospital stay within budget.

Source of Extract: News and Star

£52m cuts planned in healthcare for patients

The NHS is planning a £52.6million cut in healthcare funding for patients in Basildon and Thurrock. It is part of a radical package, designed to make dramatic savings and result in some patients treated in the community, rather than in hospital. People with diabetes, chronic lung disease, heart conditions, and mental health conditions, including dementia, would be seen at their local GP practice or clinic, instead of at hospital. The plans were announced as the South West Essex NHS Trust set a budget of £664.4million for the next financial year. About £20million of the cuts will be from hospital patient funding, with the rest affecting GPs, community care and dentists.

Source of Extract: Essex Echo

Consultants at Whittington Hospital backing fight to save A&E

In a strongly-worded statement, the consultants have said they want to keep a "high-quality, full, 24/ 7 A&E department at The Whittington". This will come as a blow to health chiefs at the North Central London NHS, who are considering axing the A&E department at the hospital in Magdala Avenue, Archway. The North Central London NHS is planning to downgrade The Whittington as part of a mass reorganisation of the six hospitals that serve Islington, Camden, Haringey, Barnet and Enfield. As such, they could shut The Whittington's A&E department or reduce it to a 16-hour service.

Source of Extract: Islington Gazette

Effects of passive smoking on the young costing NHS £23.3m a year

More than 22,000 children seek medical help for asthma and wheezing as a result of passive smoking every year, according to the first UK assessment of the impact of second-hand smoke. The 200-page report on the health impacts of passive smoking on children, and the costs to the NHS, concludes that it is responsible for thousands of avoidable hospital and GP visits, as well as for one in five sudden infant deaths. Doctors said that it provided the most compelling case yet for an extension of the smoking ban, which is due for review later this year, to enclosed public places, including cars, and open spaces frequented by children such as parks and playgrounds. Of the £23.3 million spent by the NHS every year treating the effects of passive smoking on the young, £9.7 million is due to doctors' visits and asthma treatments, £13.6 million is spent in hospital admissions and £4 million on asthma drugs for the under 16s.

Source of Extract: Times online

Extract from Budget Document

Payment of Invoices

All central government departments will now aim to pay 80 per cent of all undisputed invoices within five days and will explore the option of moving to immediate payment, in time, through electronic invoicing for all suppliers. The Government will also encourage all NHS Trusts and local authorities to publish their prompt payment performance data on data.gov.uk.

NHS Intellectual Property

The Government plans to consult on a new gateway for the export of NHS intellectual property and services. By taking commercial advantage of cutting edge medical and managerial innovations, leading UK institutions, including the five academic health science centres, will be able to raise new funds to invest in frontline patient care.

Public Sector Pensions

Cap and share provisions will be implemented for Teachers, Civil Service, NHS and Local Government pension schemes. These will cap the contribution to pensions made by employers, thereby limiting the liability of the taxpayer as pensions become more valuable. This is estimated to save £1 billion a year from 2012-13, as announced in the 2009 Pre-Budget Report.

Source of Extract: Budget Report March 2010

Department of Health and NHS to deliver £4.35bn of savings

Following the Budget statement, the Department of Health and the NHS has announced that it will deliver £4.35bn of savings, as their departmental contribution towards £11bn savings that are being made across Government.

The Department of Health and the NHS will meet this target through a range of activities including:

- Up to £1.5bn will be saved by driving down the costs of procurement through securing best prices for goods and services;
- £100m will be saved by taking a new approach to the National Programme for IT that offers greater choice to local hospitals; this is part of the £600m reduction in lifetime costs announced in December 2009;
- £60m will be saved by reducing the amount of energy the NHS uses, to deliver a 10% cut in carbon emissions;
- Up to £70m will be saved from more efficient use of NHS estates; and
- Up to £555m by reducing staff sickness absence in the NHS.

Source of Extract: bjhcim

Budget cuts NHS spending estimate by £500m

The Budget reduces the Treasury's estimate for NHS spending as a whole this year by £500m. The Treasury now expects the Department of Health to spend £99.6bn in resources this year, compared with its earlier estimate of £100.1bn at the time of its pre-Budget report in December. The missing £500m is only partly offset by a £100m increase to the Treasury's estimate for DH spending next financial year to £104.1bn. Chancellor Alistair Darling used his Budget today to confirm government expectations for the NHS to make efficiency savings of between £15bn and £20bn by 2013-14.

Source of Extract: HSJ

West Midlands to cluster PCTs to reduce management costs

NHS West Midlands is to "cluster" its primary care trusts to reduce management costs and strengthen joint working on quality and productivity. The SHA will create five sub-regional clusters, with a PCT chief executive appointed to head each one. These "cluster leads" will be responsible for identifying and implementing management cost reductions, delivering the quality, innovation, productivity and prevention (QIPP) policy, and leading clinical service reconfiguration across the cluster. However, they will not be responsible for the performance of individual PCTs, or for commissioning healthcare.

Source of Extract: HSJ

Please Note: the next NHS Newsweek will appear on 16 April