**Alcohol and Drugs**

**Emergency response strategies to prevent drug related deaths**

The Scottish Government has published a paper by Scotland’s Drugs Deaths Taskforce, setting out key evidence-based strategies for preventing drug related deaths. The paper is for Integration Authorities and their Alcohol and Drug Partnerships and other local partners, including those working in: general and specialist treatment/recovery settings; wider health and social care settings; and justice settings.

**Alzheimer's/Dementia**

**Initiative to use digital data for early detection**

Alzheimer’s Research UK has launched an initiative to build and trial wearable technologies, such as phone apps or smart watches, to collect digital data to develop signatures of disease and help with the early detection of neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer’s. Digital data measurements will reportedly be combined with traditional sources such as brain imaging and memory tests to deliver new insights into the initial stages of diseases like Alzheimer’s.
Care Homes/Care at Home

Licencing of medicines in care homes

The Scottish Parliament's Health and Sport Committee has written to the UK Government’s Secretary of State for the Home Department, asking for information on the requirement for care homes to hold a Home Office licence to keep medicines as “stock”, whereas other organisations such as hospices do not. This issue has arisen during the Committee’s inquiry into the supply and demand for medicines in Scotland.

Project to raise the profile of care home nursing (England)

The Queen’s Nursing Institute has launched a project to raise the profile of care home nursing, rebranding social care nursing and providing extra support to nurses working in the sector, Nursing Times reports. The care home nurses network will be open to registered nurses working in the care home sector, and as part of the project a series of workshops will be held in 2020 to offer training and development opportunities for network members.

Proceedings against care provider on compulsory fees to be heard (England)

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has provided an update on its proceedings against Care UK, which will be heard in the High Court in July 2020. Following intervention from the CMA, Care UK has stopped charging a compulsory upfront ‘administration’ fee but the CMA has issued court proceedings to get refunds for over 1,600 residents and to stop similar fees being charged in the future.

Infection Prevention and Control

New facilities for coronavirus testing

The Scottish Government has announced that that two new facilities have been established in Scotland to test for possible cases of novel coronavirus. The facilities are based at existing NHS laboratories in Edinburgh and Glasgow and will process samples for Scotland to ensure that test results can be returned quicker.

Mental Health

Monitoring the Mental Health Act report (England)

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has published their ninth annual report on their monitoring of the use of the Mental Health Act 1983. This report sets out the Care Quality Commission’s (CQC) findings from engagement with people subject to the Mental Health Act 1983 (MHA) and review of services registered to assess, treat and care for people detained using the MHA. Key areas of concern which the report raises include:

- the use of human rights principles and frameworks
- involvement in care
• people in long-term segregation
• access to care and treatment
• the interface between the MHA, the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

Older People

Joint inspection of services for older people in the Scottish Borders

The Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland have published a follow-up inspection of services for older people in the Scottish Borders. The progress review finds that the Health and Social Care Partnership which delivers services on behalf of the Scottish Borders Integration Joint Board has made progress in addressing each of the recommendations and demonstrated a commitment to ongoing improvement. Work undertaken by the partnership to improve planning and commissioning has been piecemeal to start, but has since become strategic and focussed, and there is a clear commitment by the partnership to continue building on the improvements and progress that it has made.

Research on the implementation of SDS for older people in care homes

Scottish Care has published research on the implementation of self-directed support (SDS) for older people in nursing and residential care homes. ‘Rights at Home: The Scottish Care Home Sector and Self-Directed Support’, looks at the experience of individuals in receipt of residential and nursing care home provision. Scottish Care concludes the research report by recommending, amongst other actions, the establishment of an independent implementation group to urgently identify and develop practical measures to ensure the implementation of the Self-directed Support Act within the residential and nursing care home sector, and that a system of robust scrutiny and inspection is established to ensure that all individuals in care homes are adequately assessed in terms of the Social Care (Self-directed Support) Act 2013, are informed of their indicative budget and supported to develop and implement a personal outcomes-based support plan.

Number of unsuccessful requests for care (England)

Age UK is publicising the results of their analysis into the number of unsuccessful requests for formal care and support for older people. Their analysis of data from NHS Digital's Adult Social Care Activity and Finance Report for 2018/19 reportedly shows that over the last year about 700,000 requests for formal care and support, equivalent to 51% of all requests, have been made by older people and did not result in them receiving formal care services. This analysis also highlights their report 'Behind the Headlines: Battling to get care', which details the calls to Age UK's information and advice line.
Other Health and Social Care

Publication of responses to Social Care Inquiry

The Scottish Parliament’s Health and Sport Committee has commenced publication of the first responses to the Social Care Inquiry, which is exploring the future delivery of social care in Scotland and what is required to meet future needs. Following closures of residential care facilities and general funding issues with independent, voluntary and council run facilities, the Health and Sport Committee has agreed to undertake an inquiry into social care for adults over 18 years old. The call for written views will close on 20 February 2020 but the first responses have been published.

Scottish Government response to social prescribing report

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport Jeane Freeman has written to the Health and Sport Committee setting out the Scottish Government’s response to the report on ‘Social Prescribing: physical activity is an investment, not a cost.’ The letter sets out the response to individual recommendations, as well as confirmation that a working group will be established to identify and communicate examples of best practice in delivery of social prescribing, and to co-produce resources for practitioners.

Report evaluating the integration of health and social care (England and Wales)

The UK Parliament’s Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) has published an evaluation of the integration of health and social care, including a background on the history of integrating health and social care in the UK, the current pressures faced by the sectors, examples of the different models of integration currently being piloted, the measures used to assess integration and the challenges of large-scale evaluation. The report examines how a number of integration models are being piloted, which aim to reduce duplication of services, minimise delays for services, decrease demand for costly hospital care, and improve user experience (including better access to services, improvements in health and well-being and better self-management of conditions). Evaluating how well different models are meeting the aims outlined above is difficult for several reasons, including:

- the vast majority of services are undertaking some form of integration and there are no easily available comparisons with services where there has never been any attempt at integration
- a lack of clear definitions of integrated care
- the ongoing and developing process of integration, and that effects from integration interventions may not occur immediately
- no specifically designed measures to look at people’s experiences of integrated care, quality of integrated services and their outcomes, or the efficiency of integrated services and systems
- traditional assessment methods are difficult to apply to integrated models
Other

Proposed spending and tax plans for 2020 to 2021

The Scottish Budget 2020-2021 has been published by the Scottish Government, with their spending plan and tax plans as the Finance Minister Kate Forbes made the Budget statement after Derek Mackay stood down as Finance Secretary. The Finance Minister pointed out that the statement comes in the context of a deferred budget announcement by the UK Government, meaning that the spending and taxation plans have been developed based on best estimates and without certainty on the fiscal position for the next year. Headlines set out by the Finance Minister include:

- record funding of over £15bn for the Health and Sport portfolio, including pooled investment of £9.4bn for health and social care partnerships and an increase of £100m funding to £811m to support social care and integration
- £117m investment in mental health
- a 60% increase in funding to reduce harm from alcohol and drugs
- an additional £6.5m to support community justice
- a real terms increase in local government support
- and the budget document mentions delivery of the Adult Support and Protection Improvement Plan among its priorities for social care, including a multi-agency inspection programme to provide assurance

Development of NICE guidance to use expanded evidence base

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has set out its ambitions to use an expanded evidence base for development of their guidance, with a broader range of data and analytics methods. The full range of data sources they will accept and the methods and analytical tools to be put in place to assess the quality and suitability of data in the future, will be set out, and their processes and methods for the identification, assessment and interpretation of data will be updated.

Bill to introduce protections for whistleblowers and independent body (England)

A Bill has been introduced to the UK Parliament to provide protections for whistleblowers; to create offences relating to the treatment of whistleblowers and the handling of whistleblowing cases; to establish an independent body to protect whistleblowers and whistleblowing, in accordance with the public interest; to make provision for that body to set, monitor and enforce standards for the management of whistleblowing cases, to provide disclosure and advice services, to direct whistleblowing investigations and to order redress of detriment suffered by whistleblowers; to repeal the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998; and for connected purposes. The Public Interest Disclosure (Protection) Bill is a Private Members’ Bill which Dr Phillipa Whitford MP has introduced, and the Second Reading is scheduled to be on 24 April 2020.
Disclaimer

This weekly bulletin is produced as an update on the key issues concerning adults and health.

Each item in the bulletin has a hyperlinked headline that will take the reader to the original source.

We collate items from our parliamentary and Scottish Government monitoring covering health and social care news from throughout the UK, and current research and policy development. We use a variety of sources for the bulletin, including alerts from Newsdirect, Community Care, Children & Young People Now and ISD Scotland.

We aim to be representative rather than comprehensive, so we try to cover only the main Scottish stories, along with some stories from the rest of the UK. The purpose of the bulletin is to alert readers to items of interest. It should be noted that these items are the works of others and are neither authorised nor endorsed by the Care Inspectorate, with the exception of publications which are identified as Care Inspectorate publications.

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