



News

1. What's going on in the LINK?

i) Health services for isolated communities

Grain Disabled and Carers Group has made representations to the LINK to intervene over the difficulties being faced by patients on the Isle of Grain, without their own transport, in getting blood taken for tests. There was a time when the local GP or nurse provided this service. Now patients have to make a 20 mile round trip costing £5.30 on public transport. This impacts on some of the most vulnerable patients. The LINK has made representations to the NHS in Medway and is awaiting a reply.

ii) Speech therapy services

The Kent Wide Downs Syndrome Group has called on the LINK to take up their concern at the lack of speech therapy in Medway. It is said that so concerned are parents at this situation that they have formed their own speech therapy group. The LINK has made representations to the NHS in Medway and is awaiting a reply.

If you have any comments to make on the above you can make them by telephone on 01634 821135, email info@kmn-ltd.co.uk or via the website at: www.themedwaylink.org.uk/index.php?q=17

2. Opportunities for LINK participants to become members of the Medway NHS Foundation Trust

One of the purposes of the Medway LINK is to provide LINK participants with opportunities to get involved in their local health and social care services

Medway LINK and Medway NHS Foundation Trust are partners together with one common goal in mind, which is to benefit the patients and community of Medway with excellent standards of care.

It is possible to be a LINK participant and also a member of the Medway NHS Foundation Trust. LINK participants will have recently received the Foundation Trust's 'FT Member's News', together with information on how to become a member and an application form.

If you would like further information contact Kristy de Robeck, Member and Governor Lead, Medway NHS Foundation Trust, Medway Maritime Hospital, Windmill Road, Gillingham, ME7 5NY, telephone 01634 825292, email Kristy.DeRobeck@medway.nhs.uk or visit the website: www.medway.nhs.uk.



3. Personal budgets for health

NHS Medway has submitted a proposal for piloting personal health budgets.

The proposed patient groups covered by this pilot will be individuals requiring end of life care - more specifically, this will cover individuals with continuing care needs who are also receiving palliative care for neurological, heart or lung conditions. This will include Motor Neurone Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Huntingdon's Disease, Parkinson's Disease, Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, etc.

It is estimated that approximately 60 clients per annum would be covered by the above categories.

The personal health budget would cover community equipment, nursing and therapy services, transport - the precise coverage would initially be dependent on the outcome of personal care plans.

For further information contact Derek Hoddinott, Medway PCT, 7 - 8 Ambley Green, Bailey Drive, Gillingham, ME8 0NJ, email Derek.Hoddinott@medwaypct.nhs.uk or telephone 07506 672604

4. Changes to prescription, dental charges and prescription vouchers comes into being on 1 April

From 1 April 2009 changes will be made to prescription charges and some dental treatments in England. The value of optical vouchers will also increase by an overall 2 per cent.

The prescription charge exemption for people being treated for cancer, the effects of cancer or the effects of cancer treatment also comes into force from that date. This new scheme will benefit up to 150,000 people already diagnosed with cancer, who might otherwise pay around £100 a year in prescription charges.

Optical vouchers help with the cost of spectacles and contact lenses for children, people on low incomes and people with complex sight problems.

The maximum dental charge for complex NHS dental treatments, such as the fitting of crowns, bridges or dentures will be frozen at the existing rate of £198. For the simplest and most common visits to the dentist, involving an examination, advice and any necessary x-rays or scale and polish, the charge will go up by 30 pence from £16.20 to £16.50. The charge for intermediate treatments such as fillings or extractions will increase by £1 from £44.60 to £45.60.



Prescription charges will increase by 10 pence from £7.10 to £7.20.

5. Personal health budgets

Lord Darzi announced through the 'High Quality Care for All' report that a pilot programme should be launched to look at the potential for personal health budgets.

It was thought that personal health budgets would improve the quality of a patient's care and provide more opportunities for choice and control over the services they receive.

Personal health budgets could work in a number of ways but could be held by commissioners or a third party and managed on behalf of the patient.

The Health Bill, which is currently before Parliament, seeks to allow the piloting of direct payments for health care which would see payments being made directly to patients, similar to the 'Individual Payments' system used by Social Care Services.

Primary Care Trusts will need to work with Local Authorities and third sector organisations to provide guidance and support to people being offered personal health budgets as part of the pilot. They will also need to seek external validation through bodies such as Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) to ensure the views of key local bodies are reflected and to enhance the credibility of users of the service.

For further information contact the Department of Health, Richmond House, 79 Whitehall, London, SW1A 2NS, telephone 020 7210 4850, email dhmail@dh.gsi.gov.uk or visit the website:

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_093842

6. Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer

Sir Liam Donaldson, the Chief Medical Officer, has published his Annual Report for 2008 in which he draws attention to major health challenges requiring immediate action and details progress made in key areas identified in previous annual reports.

The report highlights the need for:

- Passive drinking – the collateral damage from alcohol
Society to change its perception of alcohol and to begin to make being drunk socially unacceptable.
 - Prostate cancer – diagnosis
Better information being made available about diagnosis and treatment of prostate cancer
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and for research to be continued into the early identification of which low and intermediate risk tumours will progress to life-threatening tumours.

- Pain – breaking through the barrier
Training in chronic pain should be included in the curricula of all healthcare professionals and that a pain score should become part of the vital signs that are monitored routinely with patients in hospital.
- Safe medical practice – machines, manikins and polo mints
Simulation training to be fully integrated and funded within training programmes for clinicians and that training needs to be valued and adequately resourced by NHS organisations. The Chief Medical Officer also wants National Patient Safety Agency serious incident reports made available to simulation centres to embrace learning to prevent such incidents in the future.
- Antimicrobial resistance – up against the ropes
Better use and closer control of antibiotics to help protect their effectiveness, research and development of new antibiotics and ‘alert’ information on packaging to better inform people of the rising resistance of antibiotics and to encourage responsible use of them.

For further information contact the Department of Health, Richmond House, 79 Whitehall, London, SW1A 2NS, telephone 020 7210 4850, email dhmail@dh.gsi.gov.uk or visit the website:

www.dh.gov.uk/en/News/Recentstories/DH_096280

7. MRSA rates drop again

The Healthcare Commission has praised progress in infection control as numbers of patients with MRSA continue to fall across the country. It demonstrates the hard work put in by NHS staff to improve standards within hospitals but it is vital that improvements continue to be made.

For further information contact The Healthcare Commission, Freepost LON15399, London, EC1B 1QW, telephone 0845 601 3012, email feedback@healthcarecommission.org.uk or visit the website www.healthcarecommission.org.uk

8. Travel Insurance required for visits to the Channel Islands from 1 April 2009

UK residents visiting the Channel Islands must ensure they have adequate travel insurance from 1 April. The recommendation comes from the Department of Health, as the healthcare arrangements for UK visitors to the Islands are due to change.

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The current agreement, which allowed UK travellers to get a limited number of medical treatments in the Channel Islands free of charge, will end on 31 March. Anyone travelling to the Islands, which include Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney, Sark and Herm, will be required to pay for medical treatment should they become ill or injured there after this date. Visitors from the Channel Islands to the UK will also now be liable for charges for medical treatment when visiting the UK, so they should also have health insurance cover.

For further information contact The Department of Health Customer Service Centre by telephone 0207 210 4850, email dhmail@dh.gsi.gov.uk or visit the website: www.dh.gov.uk/en/News

Events

1. Kent & Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust Meeting

The next meetings of the Trust Board will be held at:

- 10.00am on Wednesday, 22 April 2009 at 35 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, ME19 4AX
- 10.00am on Wednesday, 27 May 2009 at 35 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, ME19 4AX

For further information contact Val Woodin, The Board Secretary, HQ, 35 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4AX by telephone 01227 812205, email val.woodin@kmpt.nhs.uk or visit the website at: www.kmpt.nhs.uk

Consultations

1. Fairer Charging Guidance

This paper is a consultation carried out by the Department of Health on the extension and revision of the statutory guidance for charging for non-residential social services, the 'Fairer Charging Guidance'. The accompanying guidance refers to contributions for personal budgets, which consist solely of adult social care funding. The aim of the new guidance is to

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provide councils with a system for calculating how much a person should contribute to their personal budget. It has been produced as a companion to the existing Fairer Charging guidance.

You are invited to send your views on a number of specific points which the Department has identified in the consultation document.

For further information contact Paul Brittain, FCC Team, Department of Health, Wellington House, 133-155 Waterloo Road, London, SE1 8UG, telephone 020 7972 4280, email FCC@dh.gsi.gov.uk or visit the website: www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH_093730

3. Pacesetters

Pacesetters is a collaboration between the NHS and local communities that aims to address patient and workforce inequalities that arise from discrimination and disadvantage. All comments and criticisms will be taken into account as the programme moves forward.

For further information contact Adiba Enwonwu, Equality and Human Rights Group, Department of Health, Room 688D, Skipton House, 80 London Road, London, SE1 6LH, email mb-nhs-change-programmes@dh.gsi.gov.uk or visit the website: www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH_096364

Contact Information

The Medway LINK may be contacted via the Host Organisation as below:

KMN, Avenue Business Centre, 17 New Road Avenue, Chatham, Kent, ME4 6BA.

Email: info@kmn-ltd.co.uk

Tel: 01634 821135

SMS Text: 07976 596913

Office Hours: Monday – Friday 8.30am - 4.00pm (Answerphone available out of office hours)