INTELEX WEEKLY UPDATE: 22nd May 2015

Briefing
The Prime Minister used his first speech since the election to highlight his plan for a ‘seven-day NHS... for every generation to come’ by extending out-of-hours GP services and improving hospital access at weekends. The EU has also been discussed this week as Airbus UK’s CEO Pail Kahn added his name to those warning against Britain leaving the UK. Meanwhile, the Guardian has reported that Cameron is facing issues from MPs on the Cabinet who support leaving the EU, with suggested solutions including letting ministers resign during the referendum to let them campaign.

Interim Labour Leader Harriet Harman has insisted that unions will not be able to wield too much influence over the upcoming leadership election as Unite’s General Secretary Len McCluskey yesterday said the Party has to prove it is the ‘voice of organised labour’ or risk losing the union’s affiliation. Dan Jarvis endorsed Andy Burnham as next Labour leader, as have Lord Falconer, Rachel Reeves, Michael Dugher, Luciana Berger and Owen Smith. Former Cabinet Minister Lord Hutton has said attempts by trade unions to narrow the choice would be wrong, and said that the leadership should ‘skip a generation’.

Coming up
- The Queen’s Speech will take place on the 27th May
- From Monday 15th June, Men’s Health Week will highlight preventable health problems in men and boys

Policy

David Cameron repeats pledge for ‘seven day’ NHS
The Prime Minister and NHS England Chief Executive Simon Stevens gave speeches in Birmingham on the future of the NHS, in which Cameron gave his full backing to the NHS Five Year Forward View and recommitted to the addition £8 billion NHS funding the plan requires. Both Cameron and Stevens set out their ‘visions’ for the NHS, based entirely on the Forward View, which the Prime Minister deferred to as the go to plan for the NHS.

Neither the Prime Minister nor Stevens set out where the required efficiencies would be found within the health service. However, Stevens did announce that in two weeks’ time, NHS England will set out further details of NHS efficiency savings through a ‘£22 billion efficiency challenge.’ Speaking ahead of the Prime Minister, Stevens reiterated the three lines of focus for the NHS over the next parliament: prevention of disease through improving public health; fundamental redesign of how care is provided including integrating hospital and community care: and health and social care and physical and mental healthcare. His final point emphasised the need for NHS finances to be placed on a sustainable footing.
The Prime Minister used his first post-election speech to restate his commitment to the NHS and set the record straight on some of the accusations he faced from Labour on the NHS during the general election campaign. Clarifying these, he restated he had not cut NHS funding or doctor numbers nor had he privatised the NHS, and cited the benefits of voluntary providers involvement in the NHS, stating very clearly that he would not privatise the health service.

In assessing the progress of the NHS over the last five years, he highlighted the Cancer Drugs Fund as a particular achievement, having given 65,000 patients access to drugs that would not have otherwise been possible. He went on to say that in the future the NHS needs to be able to take advantage of new science and technologies as well as address a need for fast access to new drugs and treatments, citing the cost of other diseases such as diabetes to the health service.

*It's worth noting that some commentators have already suggested that the Prime Minister's focus on NHS England's Five Year Forward View may provide him with a safety net in the future against any criticism of his health policy, allowing him to demonstrate that it comes from an independent plan and shifting the emphasis onto NHS England to deliver it.*

*Norman Lamb, the Liberal Democrat MP and former health minister, has also warned that the NHS would need even more extra money than the billions of pounds already promised by the Conservatives to fulfil Cameron's ambition of a 'seven day' NHS, as did Andrew Gwynne MP, Labour's Shadow Health Minister. The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges supported these comments, saying that hospital budgets would need to increase along with the tariff payments they receive for treating patients.*

**SNP makes announces health spokesperson**

Following the SNP’s success at the General Election, the Party has announced the 35 roles some of its 56 MPs will undertake at Westminster.

Surgeon Philippa Whitford MP (Central Ayrshire) will take the health brief. Elected as part of the new wave of SNP MPs, she overthrew the 12,000 majority of Labour's Brian Donohoe and secured a 13,589 majority of her own. After studying medicine in Glasgow, she worked as a medical volunteer consulting in a UN hospital in Gaza from 1991 to 1992, which she followed by working in Southern Lebanon for Medical Aid for Palestinians, returning to work for the NHS in 1994 in Aberdeen, most recently working as a consultant breast cancer surgeon at Crosshouse Hospital in Kilmarnock. In this role she has helped lead the development of Scottish Breast Cancer standards, raising the quality of care across Scotland.

*Whitford only became involved in politics during the Scottish referendum campaign, where she fronted the campaign in favour of independence as a way of protecting the NHS in Scotland from a 'creeping privatisation agenda.' There was widespread media backlash against a claim she made during the referendum campaign that privatisation was forcing cancer hospitals to cancel operations. She was forced to admit she had no evidence to support her claims.*

*Although privatisation of services will be her focus, as a cancer specialist she will likely have an interest in issues such as the Cancer Drugs Fund, which also affect the Urology Foundation.*

**Announcement on Select Committee chairmanships**
A leaked email from the Chief Whip has revealed the allocation of committee chairs to certain parties. The Health Committee will remain with a Conservative chair.

**Dr Sarah Wollaston MP (Con, Totnes) has widely been considered an effective chair, making it likely that she will retain the position (having announced that she plans to run).** Wollaston also reported that homeopathy fan and MP for Bosworth David Tredinnick may also run, despite having lost to Wollaston after Stephen Dorrell stepped down last year.

**Media**

**Guardian: ‘Prostate cancer ‘Rosetta stone’ paves way to targeted drugs’**
The Guardian have reported on findings from the Institute of Cancer Research in London, which drew a comprehensive map of genetic mutations linked to different strains of prostate cancer. Researchers found that almost 90 per cent of the men whose DNA they studied carried potentially treatable defects. This could lead to personalised medicines that target specific gene defects.

The study was also reported by the Independent, the Telegraph, the Daily Mail and the BBC.

**Mirror: ‘Men who orgasm every day have lower risk of prostate cancer’**
The Mirror has reported that men who orgasm every day have a lower risk of prostate cancer. Scientists at the Harvard Medical School followed nearly 32,000 healthy men over 18 years, almost 4,000 of whom went on to develop prostate cancer. Researchers found that men in the 40-49 age range who ejaculated at least 21 times per month were 22 per cent less likely to develop the disease than those who ejaculated between four and seven times per month. Dr Jennifer Rider was quoted as saying that, although the results seem compelling, it is observational data and should be interpreted ‘somewhat cautiously’.

The study was also reported by the Telegraph, Daily Mail and Independent.

**Daily Mail: ‘Taking paracetamol while pregnant ‘could harm baby boys’: Drug raises risk of conditions such as infertility and cancer later in life’**
The Daily Mail has reported that Edinburgh University researchers said Britons have ‘become blasé about paracetamol’s potential dangers’, as ‘several studies’ have suggested it interferes with the development of the male reproductive system while still in the womb.

**Devolved**

**Fertility treatment in Scotland**
This week, the 21 May 2015, the Committee wrote to the Minister for Public Health on the provision of NHS fertility services in Scotland. After taking evidence in March from Infertility Network Scotland; Fertility Fairness; NHS Tayside; NHS Grampian; NHS Lothian; and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, the Committee wrote to highlight some of the main issues they felt has arisen.

The focus of the letter was on IVF and women’s fertility treatment. Although infertility in men was not specifically referenced, however the Committee added that they considers that it is important for those receiving fertility services that they feel ‘well supported throughout their treatment’.
The Committee intends to return to these infertility issues once the Scottish National Infertility Group has issued an upcoming report, which is expected by the end of the year. We will continue to monitor for any issues of interest to the Urology Foundation.

**New medicines fund**
In the Scottish Parliament, Bob Doris MSP (SNP, Glasgow) has tabled a question asking the Scottish Government how much funding it has allocated to the New Medicines Fund for 2015-16.

*In Holyrood, Bob Doris MSP is Deputy Convener of the Health and Sport Committee, which has recently produced reports on mental health, assisted suicide and health inequalities.*

*We will continue to monitor for an answer.*