

The Queen's Speech, May 2022

HRH The Prince of Wales outlined the government's priorities for the year ahead, highlighting laws that the government intends to pass in the coming year.

Growing and strengthening the economy, easing the cost of living for families, and levelling up the UK was at the heart of this [Queen's Speech](#), saying that it "will drive economic growth to improve living standards and fund sustainable investment in public services". This will be supported by the creation of a new UK Infrastructure Bank which will have powers to lend directly to local authorities, enabling the Bank to play a key role in delivering public sector infrastructure projects.

The Queen's Speech has four key themes:

- growing the economy to address the cost of living
- making the streets safer
- funding the NHS to clear the COVID-19 backlogs
- providing the leadership needed in challenging times

This briefing contains an overview of key announcements relevant to health and social care, along with a summary of other legislation and policies of interest. The key health announcement is the draft Mental Health Act Reform Bill, which we expect to see published in the summer.

Health and social care focused announcements

Draft Mental Health Act Reform Bill

The purpose of this draft Bill is to ensure patients suffering from mental health conditions have greater control over their treatment and receive the dignity and respect they deserve. It will also make it easier for people with learning disabilities and autism to be discharged from hospital.

The main elements of the draft Bill are:

- Amending the definition of mental disorder so that people can no longer be detained solely because they have a learning disability or because they are autistic.

- Changing the criteria needed to detain people, so that the Act is only used where strictly necessary: where the person is a genuine risk to their own safety or that of others, and where there is a clear therapeutic benefit.
- Giving patients better support, including offering everyone the option of an independent mental health advocate, and allowing patients to choose their own 'nominated person', rather than have a 'nearest relative' assigned for them.
- Introducing a 28-day time-limit for transfers from prison to hospital for acutely ill prisoners and ending the temporary use of prison for those awaiting assessment or treatment.
- Introducing a new form of supervised community discharge. This will allow the discharge of restricted patients into the community, with the necessary care and supervision to adequately and appropriately manage their risk.
- Increasing the frequency with which patients can make appeals to Tribunals on their detention and provide Tribunals with a power to recommend that aftercare services are put in place.
- Introducing a statutory care and treatment plan for all patients in detention. This will be written with the patient and will set out a clear pathway to discharge.

In January 2021, the Department of Health and Social Care published a white paper on [Reforming the Mental Health Act](#). The paper set out reforms which build on recommendations made by an independent review in December 2018: [Modernising the Mental Health Act: Increasing choice, reducing compulsion](#). The government consulted on the white paper's proposals from January to April 2021 and published a [consultation response](#) in July 2021.

NHS Providers [responded](#) to the Department's consultation on the white paper and will continue to engage with the Department and parliament as the Bill is subjected to pre-legislative scrutiny. We will make written submissions to the Bill committee with a focus on the practical implementation of a number of proposals. We will also seek opportunities to address mental health inequalities between people from different sections of society, especially black, Asian and minority ethnic communities for whom the pandemic has exacerbated longstanding inequalities, and work to improve their access to services and their outcomes.

Further policies and bills of interest

Women's health strategy

England's first ever women's health strategy will be published this year. This will ensure the system offers equal access to effective care and support and prioritising care on the basis of clinical need.

The strategy will be underpinned by the analysis of almost 100,000 responses to the call for evidence consultation in 2021.

The strategy will focus on priority healthcare issues for women across the course of their lives:

- priority healthcare issues: menstrual health and gynaecological conditions; fertility, pregnancy, pregnancy loss and post-natal support; the menopause; healthy ageing and long-term conditions; mental health; and the health impacts of violence against women and girls; and
- thematic priorities: women's voices; healthcare policies and services; information and education; health in the workplace; and research evidence and data.

Health and social care funding

The new Health and Social Care Levy, along with an increase to the rates of dividend tax, will raise around £13 billion per year for spending on health and social care across the UK. Funding from the Levy, on top of the long-term NHS settlement announced in 2018, means that the NHS resource budget in England will stand at £162.6 billion in 2024-25, which includes the c£8 billion the government plans to spend over the next three years to tackle the elective backlog. The Government has also committed to a £5.9 billion investment in NHS capital over three years, to provide new beds, equipment and technology.

Social care and integration

From October 2023, the government will implement the social care cap, placing an £86,000 limit on the amount anyone in England will have to spend on their personal care costs over their lifetime. The government will also expand the means test from October 2023.

The government's integration white paper will build on the Health and Care Act 2022, bringing the NHS and local government closer together to join up health and social care services. This will include the design of a shared outcomes framework, with a single accountable person who will be responsible for the delivery of these shared outcomes including shared health and care plans for people locally.

Procurement Bill

This Bill, also announced in the previous Queen's Speech, will create a simpler and more transparent system. Public sector buyers will be given more freedom and flexibility to negotiate with suppliers and to design the buying process to meet the needs of their specific procurement. New arrangements will be put in place to facilitate buying at pace when needed to protect life, health, or public order.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Enshrining in law the objectives of public procurement including: delivering value for money, maximising public benefit, treating suppliers equally and without discrimination, and acting, and being seen to act, with integrity.
- Requiring buyers to have regard to the government's strategic priorities for public procurement as set out in the National Procurement Policy Statement.
- Introducing new, clearer arrangements for how contracting authorities can buy at pace if necessary to protect life or health, public order or safety, with strengthened safeguards for transparency.

Modern Slavery Bill

Also linked to procurement are the government plans to strengthen the protection and support for victims of human trafficking and modern slavery through this Bill. It will mandate the reporting areas to be covered in modern slavery statements, requiring organisations to publish their statements on a government-run registry, as well as extending these requirements to public bodies and introducing civil penalties for organisations that do not comply with the requirements.

Social Housing Regulation Bill

Poor housing is linked to poor health outcomes and is thought to have contributed to community transmission of COVID-19. The ambition of this Bill is to increase social housing tenants' rights to better homes and enhance their ability to hold their landlords to account. It will ensure that the Regulator of Social Housing can better stand up for social housing tenants, inspect properties and act as the ultimate watchdog on standards. It will provide greater transparency for tenants on how their landlord is performing, how their homes are managed and who is responsible for compliance with health and safety requirements.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Enabling the Regulator to intervene where landlords are performing poorly on consumer issues, such as complaints handling and decency of homes, and to act in the interest of tenants to make sure issues are rectified.
- Enabling the Regulator to inspect landlords to make sure they are providing tenants with the quality of accommodation and services that they deserve.
- Guaranteeing that the Regulator will be able to act more quickly where it has concerns about the decency of a home and providing powers for the Regulator to arrange emergency repairs of tenants' homes.

Renters Reform Bill

This Bill is focused on improving housing conditions by halving the number of non-decent rented homes by 2030 and creating a rental market that is fairer and more effective for tenants and landlords.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Abolishing so-called 'no fault' evictions by removing Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988.
- Applying the legally binding Decent Homes Standard in the Private Rented Sector.
- Introduce a new Ombudsman for private landlords so that disputes can easily be resolved.

Bill of Rights

This is the long-heralded reform of the Human Rights Act which enshrines the right to life and offers important protections from discrimination. The government's ambition is to restore the balance of power between the legislature and the courts.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Establishing the primacy of UK case law, clarifying there is no requirement to follow the Strasbourg case law and that UK courts cannot interpret rights in a more expansive manner than the Strasbourg Court.
- Ensuring that UK courts can no longer alter legislation contrary to its ordinary meaning and constraining the ability of the UK courts to impose 'positive obligations' on our public services without proper democratic oversight by restricting the scope for judicial legislation.
- Guaranteeing spurious cases do not undermine public confidence in human rights so that courts focus on genuine and credible human rights claims. The responsibility to demonstrate a significant disadvantage before a human rights claim can be heard in court will be placed on the claimant.

Brexit Freedom Bill

This Bill will fulfil a manifesto commitment to ensure that retained EU law can be amended, repealed or replaced with legislation which better suits the UK. It will modernise the UK's approach to making regulations whilst maintaining high standards.

Data Reform Bill

The government wants to create a new UK data protection framework. This Bill will modernise the Information Commissioner's Office, making sure it has the capabilities and powers to take stronger action against organisations that breach data rules while requiring it to be more accountable to parliament and the public. It will also give citizens and small businesses more control of their data.

The Bill will also help those who need health care treatments, by helping improve appropriate access to data in health and social care contexts and by enabling data to be shared more efficiently between public bodies.

Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill

The government will introduce a Bill designed to drive local growth by empowering local leaders to regenerate their areas. The planning system will be reformed to give residents more involvement in local development to ensure that communities have the infrastructure they need, such as housing schools and GPs.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Creating a new model of combined authority: the 'County Deal' which will provide local leaders with powers to enhance local accountability, join up services and provide transparent decision making to rejuvenate their communities, increasing their ability to reflect local preferences in arrangements including directly elected leaders' titles.
- Strengthening neighbourhood planning and digitalising the system to make local plans easier to find, understand and engage with.

Conversion Therapy Bill

This Bill will ban conversion therapy practices intended to change sexual orientation.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Respecting clinicians' independence. The Bill will not impact the existing professional frameworks that guide clinicians' ability to support people. Robust, exploratory and challenging conversations which are part of regulated care do not fall within the scope of the ban.
- Strengthening existing criminal law by ensuring that violent conversion therapy is recognised as a potential aggravating factor upon sentencing.

- Introducing a criminal offence banning non-physical conversion therapies to complement existing legislation which protects people from acts which inflict physical harm. The offence will protect under-18s, regardless of circumstance, and over-18s who do not consent and who are coerced or forced to undergo conversion therapy practices.
- Introducing Conversion Therapy Protection Orders.
- Protecting freedom of speech, ensuring parents, clinicians and teachers can continue to have conversations with people seeking support.

Energy Security Bill

The Energy Bill and Security Bill will deliver the transition to cheaper, cleaner, and more secure energy. This will build on the success of the COP26 Summit in Glasgow last year.”

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Introducing state-of-the-art business models for Carbon Capture Usage and Storage transport and storage, low carbon hydrogen and industrial carbon capture which will fire the starting gun on new, low-carbon technologies.
- Reducing the risk of fuel supply disruption by giving Government the power to give directions to, require information from, and provide financial assistance to core fuel sector businesses to ensure resilience and continuity of fuel supply.
- Extending the energy price cap, preventing suppliers from overcharging consumers.
- Introducing competition in Britain’s onshore electricity networks, encouraging investment and innovation, and enabling savings.
- Establishing a new Future System Operator, providing strategic oversight across electricity and gas systems. It will drive progress towards net zero, energy security and minimising consumer costs.

NHS Providers press statement

Responding to proposed new measures to reform mental health legislation set out in today's Queen's Speech, director of policy and strategy at NHS Providers Miriam Deakin said:

"Trust leaders will welcome the announcement in today's Queen's Speech that ministers will publish proposals to reform the Mental Health Act. Reform here is long overdue and we are pleased, as we mark mental health awareness week, that this is a priority for the government.

"We support proposed changes to the Act that will give people a greater say in planning their care and recovery. It will be important for the Bill to reflect consideration of the practical implementation of a number of proposals.

"A new Mental Health Act on its own won't be enough to guarantee high-quality mental health services or transform the way we deliver them for years to come. Mental health services are under severe strain from huge demand and limited resources.

"COVID-19 has left a significant legacy on the nation's mental health, particularly for children and young people, and the effects of poor mental health are expected to last longer than in some other areas of care.

"The pandemic has taken its toll on overstretched NHS staff too, with the soaring cost of living now adding more pressure. Trusts are working hard to safeguard the mental health and wellbeing of their workforce, but we need a long-term plan to attract and retain staff as well as more support.

"We must address too mental health inequalities between people from different sections of society – especially black, Asian and minority ethnic communities for whom the pandemic has exacerbated longstanding inequalities – and work to improve their access to services and outcomes.

"Coming hard on the heels of the biggest health service reforms for more than 10 years under the new Health and Care Act, we look forward to seeing detailed government proposals to reform the Mental Health Act as soon as possible."