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## Cancer/Stroke/Cardiovascular

### Cancer dataset shows improvements in diagnosis (17/01/18)

Cancer survival in England is lower than the European average, which has been at least partly attributed to later stage at diagnosis in English patients. There are substantial regional and demographic variations in cancer survival across England. The award-winning [Routes to Diagnosis](#) study defines a methodology by which the route the patient follows to the point of diagnosis can be categorised, in order to examine demographic, organisational, service and personal reasons for delayed diagnosis.

Routes to Diagnosis now includes 10 years' worth of data. The data shows a dramatic improvement in the way some cancers are being diagnosed across England, but also pinpoints areas where improvements could still be made.

This latest update includes a new [interactive tool](#) which, for the first time, shows trends in cancer diagnosis for 53 different types of cancer. By using the tool doctors and managers will be able to quickly and easily see the differences between cancers and understand where survival rates are improving.

[Press release](#)

### Universal blood test for cancer (19/01/18)

Scientists have taken a step towards one of the biggest goals in medicine - a universal blood test for cancer.

A team at Johns Hopkins University has trialled a method that detects eight common forms of the disease. The CancerSEEK test is a blood test that can detect eight common cancer types through assessment of the levels of circulating proteins and mutations in cell-free DNA, is published [here](#). Their vision is an annual test designed to catch cancer early and save lives. UK experts said it was "enormously exciting".

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## Children/Young People/Families

### The wellbeing of 15-year-olds: analysis of the What About YOUth? survey (17/01/18)

The [2014 What About YOUth? \(WAY\) survey](#), published by Public Health England (PHE), included measures of wellbeing which can be analysed to examine the relationships between health behaviours and attitudes on the wellbeing of 15-year-olds.

Commissioners and providers of health, social care and education can use this information to target local resources where they are likely to have most impact in terms of improving the wellbeing of young people.

### Call for a review of the current model of adoption (19/01/18)

Social work ethics 'not routinely used' to inform adoption practice, enquiry suggests

A [2 year enquiry](#) calls for a review of the current model of adoption.

The study, commissioned by the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) in 2016, concluded that "a human rights discourse in social work in relation to adoption is under-developed".

The enquiry made 5 recommendations:

1. The use of adoption needs to be located and discussed in the context of wider social policies relating to poverty and inequality
2. The collection of publication of data by UK governments on the economic and social circumstances of families affected by adoption
3. A review of the current model of adoption, and consider what a more open model of adoption could look like
4. Further debate about the status of adoption and its relationship to other permanence options
5. Further work by BASW on the role of the social worker in adoption and human rights and ethics involved.

The BASW has published its [response](#)

### Providers introduce charges to make 30 hours free childcare viable (18/01/18)

A [survey](#) by the Pre-school Learning Alliance of 1,662 childcare providers, found only a third of those asked said they were offering the 30-hours 'completely free' without any additional charges to parents.

The survey also found that:

- 28% of providers are not offering any 30-hours places totally free to parents
- 37% of providers have introduced or increased charges for additional goods/services because of the 30-hours offer
- 66% of providers are planning to change the way they deliver the 30-hours offer in the next 12 months, most commonly by increasing their fees and additional charges to make the 30 hours free childcare scheme viable 37 per cent of settings said they had introduced charges for additional goods or services such as meals or snacks because of the 30-hour offer being introduced.

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## Commissioning and Economics

### Problem debt and Low-Income Households (16/01/18)

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has published a report 'Problem Debt and Low-Income Households'.

The [report](#) finds that:

- More than one in 5 people on low income have problem debt, compared to one in 20 for those at the top of the income scale.
- Around half of households in Great Britain in 2012–14 had some unsecured consumer debt, with 10% of households holding over £10,000 of such debt. Almost half of this kind of debt is from formal loans (43%), with credit and store card debt (25%) and hire purchase debt (21%) the next most significant categories.
- Those with lower incomes are less likely to hold any unsecured debt, but are more likely to be in 'net debt', with unsecured debts of greater value than their financial assets. 35% of those in the lowest income decile have debts of greater value than their financial assets. This compares with 10% in the highest income decile.

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## Communities and Local Government

### Public health grants to local authorities: 2018 to 2019 (15/01/18)

[Update](#) to the public health allocations to local authorities for improving local population health and the conditions for using the money.

In this update a consolidated spreadsheet of allocations for 2018 to 2019 and indicative allocations for 2019 to 2020 has been added.

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## Disabilities

### Autism self-assessment framework exercise (16/01/18)

Public Health England has published the [findings](#) from the fourth autism self-assessment exercise carried out by local authorities (LAs) between July and November 2016. It shows the LAs' progress towards meeting the requirements of the [Autism Act 2009](#).

Slide presentations on the 2016 autism self-assessment responses by the local authorities in each of the former Government Office Regions in England are also available. [South East](#).

### Therapy interventions for children with neurodisabilities: a qualitative scoping study (18/01/18)

The objectives of this scoping study were to (1) describe the current practice, approaches and schools of thought in relation to physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy for children with neurodisability; (2) explore clinical decision-making; (3) investigate views on outcomes and their measurement, particularly participation as an outcome, that is, the child's ability to have the opportunity to be involved in life situations and activities (e.g. communication, mobility, interpersonal interactions, self-care, learning and applying knowledge); (4) seek views on the aspects of therapy interventions that have an impact on outcomes; and (5) elicit stakeholder views on research needs and priorities.

The identification of research priorities was a core study objective, and a wide-ranging research agenda was identified. It included 'foundational' research into neurodisability, the active components of therapy interventions and the concept of participation. Three areas of evaluation were identified: overall approaches to therapy, service organisation and delivery issues, and the evaluation of specific techniques. Parents regarded evaluations of approaches to therapy (e.g. goals-focused; supporting family-self management) as priorities, along with evaluations of models of service provision. Professionals' views were broadly similar, with an additional emphasis on methodological research.

The [results](#) of this research are available to download from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Journals Library.

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## Drugs/Alcohol

### Substance misuse treatment in secure settings: statistics 2016 to 2017 (18/01/18)

Public Health England (PHE) has published statistics on alcohol and drug misuse treatment in prisons and other secure settings from PHE's national drug treatment monitoring system (NDTMS).

The [report and data](#) shed light on:

outcomes of alcohol and drug treatment services in secure settings in England  
the profile of adults and young people accessing alcohol and drug treatment services in secure settings

The data will help with planning, commissioning and improving services in prisons and other secure settings.

### Health Survey England 2016 & Drinkaware Monitor 2017 reports (12/01/18)

[Alcohol Policy UK](#) discusses two recent reports detailing recent consumption and drinking behaviour insights, namely the annual [Health Survey England \(HSE\) 2016](#) and [Drinkaware Monitor 2017](#).

Whilst the proportion of both men and women drinking at increased or higher risk of harm decreased between 2011 and 2016 (from 35% of men and 18% of women), HSE suggests there has been no statistically significant change since 2011 in average weekly consumption across all drinkers. In 2016, mean consumption was 16.0 units per week for men and 9.1 units per week for women.

Drinkaware Monitor contains a new segmentation analysis identifying eight distinct groups of drinkers with similar attitudes or behaviours, based on responses to key questions/metrics including AUDIT scores, drinking occasions, well-being and other characteristics including attitudes.

### The increasing size of wine glasses: a driver of consumption? (17/01/18)

[Alcohol Policy UK](#) takes up the debate after a recent study published in the [British Medical Journal](#) has revealed the increase in average wine glass sizes over time, with a near seven fold increase since the 1700s and a particularly sharp rise since the 1990s.

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## Education

### Developing Character Skills in Schools (18/01/18)

This [research](#) was commissioned to explore and share learning about how schools are delivering character education. It was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to inform the focus of policy activity on mental health and character education in schools and colleges in England. It is based on qualitative research carried out between May 2016 and February 2017. The research was set against a backdrop of growing evidence demonstrating the positive impact of emotional wellbeing on educational and other outcomes for children and young people.

Schools prioritise a number of different character traits including: resilience, self-esteem and confidence, communication skills, self-regulation, perseverance and motivation, respect, tolerance and empathy.

The report [Supporting mental health in schools and colleges](#) (August 2017) is part of the same research.

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## Environment/Transport/Housing

### Healthy High Streets: good place making in an urban setting (17/01/18)

Public Health England (PHE) commissioned the UCL Institute of Health Equity to synthesise the latest and most relevant evidence for local decision makers, built environment professionals (eg planners, urban designers, landscape architects), town managers, public health professionals, and others involved in implementing street design principles on the health and wellbeing benefits of making high streets more inclusive, safe and healthier, particularly in areas of high deprivation.

This [review](#) provides a rapid assessment of evidence relating to pedestrian friendly, healthy high streets in urban settings, with specific reference to design interventions and street furniture. Evidence relating to both children and adults is considered, alongside groups who may have specific needs or preferences such as older people, younger people, disabled people (considering specific impairments where relevant) and different ethnic groups.

See also [Code of Practice](#) from an alliance of the largest food and beverage brands to tackle sugar reduction

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## Health Care

### Pressure ulcers guidance (17/01/18)

Public Health England (PHE) has published information for healthcare professionals on how to protect people from pressure ulcers (bed sores).

A pressure ulcer is a localised injury to the skin and/or underlying tissue usually over a bony prominence. The 4 main factors implicated are pressure, shear, friction, and local micro climate. Pressure ulcers can range in severity from patches of discoloured skin to open wounds that expose the underlying bone or muscle.

The [guidance](#) covers core principles, measuring outcomes, and examples of good practice. It was last updated in April 2015.

## NAO: Sustainability and transformation in the NHS (19/01/18)

The [National Audit Office \(NAO\)](#) reports that additional funding, aimed to help the NHS get on a financially sustainable footing, has instead been spent on coping with existing pressures.

The NHS received an additional £1.8 billion Sustainability and Transformation Fund in 2016-17 to give it breathing space to set itself up to survive on significantly less funding growth from 2017-18 onwards. It was also intended to give it stability to improve performance and transform services, to achieve a sustainable health system.

Despite its overall financial position improving, the NHS is struggling to manage increased activity and demand within its budget and has not met NHS access targets. Furthermore, measures it took to rebalance its finances have restricted money available for longer-term transformation, which is essential for the NHS to meet demand, drive efficiencies and improve the service.

Progress has been made in setting up 44 new partnership arrangements across health and local government, which are laying the foundations for a more strategic approach to meeting the demand for health services within the resources available. In reality, partnerships' effectiveness varies and their tight financial positions make it difficult for them to shift focus from short-term day-to-day pressures to delivering transformation of services. However clinical commissioning groups and trusts are increasingly reliant on one-off measures to deliver savings, rather than recurrent savings that are realised each year.

[Local Government Association](#)  
[Nuffield Trust](#)

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## Health Protection/Emergencies

### UK flu levels remain high according to PHE statistics (18/01/18)

[Public Health England \(PHE\)](#) has published the most recent [national flu report](#). Seasonal flu activity levels have continued to increase across the UK but various indicators show the rate of increase is slowing.

The statistics show over the last week there has been an 11% increase in the flu hospitalisation rate, a 42% increase in the GP consultation rate with flu like illness compared to the previous week (when practices were open for 4 days), and an 8% reduction in the flu intensive care admission rate. The main strains circulating continue to be flu A(H3N2), A(H1N1) and Flu B.

The 'Catch It, Bin It, Kill It' campaign continues to run across digital, radio and press advertising platforms to inform the public about the steps they can take to protect themselves and reduce spread of the virus by practising good respiratory hand hygiene.

see also [Winter health watch](#)  
[Emergency department bulletin](#)

## Bird flu prevention zone extended to cover whole of England (18/01/18)

A [bird flu prevention zone](#) has been declared across the whole of England by Chief Veterinary Officer Nigel Gibbens on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Food Standards Agency, Public Health England, and Animal and Plant Health Agency.

This means it is a legal requirement for all bird keepers to follow strict biosecurity measures. It comes as 13 dead wild birds were confirmed to have the virus in Warwickshire.

Last week 17 wild birds tested positive in Dorset and a total of 31 infected birds have now been identified at that site. As these latest results show the disease is not isolated to a single site the decision has been taken to extend the prevention zone across the country on a precautionary basis.

Testing of the birds found in Warwickshire is ongoing, however, it is expected that this will be the same H5N6 strain of the virus which has been circulating in wild birds across Europe in recent months. Public Health England have advised the risk to public health remains very low and the Food Standards Agency have said that bird flu does not pose a food safety risk for UK consumers.

## The Green Book: update (17/01/18)

The [Green Book](#) has the latest information on vaccines and vaccination procedures, for vaccine preventable infectious diseases in the UK.

The most recent update is [Pneumococcal: chapter 25](#). Pneumococcal disease is the term used to describe infections caused by the bacterium *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (also called pneumococcus).

The pneumococcus is one of the most frequently reported causes of bacteraemia and meningitis in children and adults. In 2000, the World Health Organisation estimated that there were around 14.5 million episodes of serious pneumococcal disease globally, resulting in about 826 000 deaths in children aged under five years of age. There is marked seasonality with invasive pneumococcal disease, with a consistent winter peak every year (December to February) (Trotter et al., 2010). The pneumococcus is also the commonest cause of community-acquired pneumonia, as well as non-invasive, upper respiratory tract infections such as otitis media and sinusitis.

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## Long-term Conditions

### Diabetes commentary: CCG Improvement and Assessment Framework (CCG IAF) (18/01/18)

A [commentary](#) on the 2016/17 diabetes assessment from the independent panel chair, Chris Askew, as part of the CCG Improvement and Assessment Framework (CCG IAF).

Points made:

1. The 2016/17 assessment shows a considerable improvement in the number of CCGs being rated as outstanding and good. This is largely due to increased participation in the National Diabetes Audit (NDA).
2. The NHS England diabetes programme is funding regional diabetes network leads who are particularly focussed on helping those areas that most need to improve in the CCG IAF and have not received transformation funding.

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## Maternity/Infants

### Teenage pregnancy prevention framework (15/01/18)

This [framework](#), from Public Health England, aims to help local areas assess their teenage pregnancy prevention programmes to see what is working well and identify any gaps. It will support local services to take a multi-agency whole-system approach to prevent unplanned pregnancies and support young people to develop healthy relationships. The framework is accompanied by a presentation and data reports which will help to inform local authority commissioning decisions.

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## Mental Health and Wellbeing

### PM commits to government-wide drive to tackle loneliness (17/01/18)

The Prime Minister has set out how government is tackling [loneliness](#) and combating social isolation. She will announce that the government is accepting a series of [recommendations](#) from the [Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness](#).

Research shows:

more than 9 million people always or often feel lonely  
around 200,000 older people have not had a conversation with a friend or relative in more than a month  
up to 85% of young disabled adults – 18-34 year olds – feel lonely

The Prime Minister has today implemented the first of the Jo Cox Commission's recommendations – appointing a ministerial lead on loneliness. The Minister for Sport and Civil Society Tracey Crouch will lead a cross-government group which will take responsibility for driving action on loneliness across all parts of government and keeping it firmly on the agenda.

[Tracey Crouch](#) was appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport, Tourism and Heritage on 12 May 2015. She was elected as the Conservative MP for Chatham and Aylesford in 2010.

### Wellbeing in mental health: applying All Our Health (18/01/18)

Public Health England has updated [Wellbeing in mental health: applying All Our Health](#). The update is the 'Quality and Outcomes Framework for 2017 to 2018' section to reflect current indicators for people with serious mental illness.

### Funding and staffing of NHS mental health providers: still waiting for parity (16/01/18)

In 2013 the government made a commitment to achieving parity of esteem between physical and mental health. That commitment was followed by a pledge of £1.25 billion for child and adolescent mental health, a national strategy for adult mental health and an investment of £1 billion to support its delivery.

This [briefing](#) from the King's Fund considers the current situation based on:

- an analysis of the annual financial accounts of NHS mental health, acute and specialist provider trusts
- an analysis of the national workforce data
- a review of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection reports for each of the 54 NHS mental health trusts



- a review of the board papers of eight mental health trusts covering a six-month period from January 2016; the trusts were selected to include the four with the greatest increases in staffing over this time and four with the greatest decreases and to include trusts from each of the NHS England regions.

## Online Suicide Prevention report (14/01/18)

Grant Shapps MP has launched a report to mark 'Blue Monday': [Online Suicide Prevention: A Pro-active Strategy for Government and the Internet Industry](#).

The report is the product of a two-year research programme which included an Online Suicide Prevention Summit held in Parliament in May 2016, alongside a 'Call for Evidence' from leading organisations and individuals involved in both suicide prevention and the internet industry. The research identified some extremely positive and deeply negative aspects of the internet and social media, with regard to suicide prevention. A series of specific recommendations are made for both government and the internet industry; in order to make the internet a positive and safe environment for those who may be vulnerable.

## Mental Health Services Monthly Statistics: Final October, Provisional November 2017 (19/01/18)

This publication from [NHS Digital](#) provides the most recent statistics (August to November 2017) available relating to NHS funded secondary mental health, learning disabilities and autism services in England.

Key Facts include:

**Mental health, learning disabilities and autism services**

At the end of October, there were 1,204,009 people in contact with services; the majority of these 997,188 were in adult mental health services. There were 154,310 people in contact with children and young people's mental health services and 80,883 in learning disabilities and autism services .

278,519 new referrals were received into services during October and 1,659,019 care contacts were attended.

18,991 people were subject to the Mental Health Act at the end of October, including 13,541 people detained in hospital.

**Adult mental health services**

Between 1 August and 31 October 3,409 referrals with suspected first episode psychosis started treatment, of which 2,180 (63.9 per cent) waited two weeks or less.

**Children and young people in contact with mental health services**

Between 1 August and 31 October 2,083 new referrals for people aged under 19 with eating disorder issues were received.

Of the 1,142,123 in contact with mental health services at the end of October, 250,879 (22.0 per cent) were aged under 19.

**People with learning disabilities and/or autism**

There were 3,070 people with learning disabilities and/or autistic spectrum disorders in hospital at the end of October of which 1,495 were in a secure setting.

Of those people with learning disabilities and/or autistic spectrum disorders in hospital at the end of October, 1,060 (34 per cent) had been in hospital for over 2 years.

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**Safeguarding**

## Public 'the first line of defence' to tackle modern slavery amid rise in potential victims (17/01/18)

The [Local Government Association \(LGA\)](#) said latest official figures reveal an increase of almost half (47 per cent) in the numbers of people referred as potential victims last summer, with 1,322 victims referred through July – September 2017, compared to 901 during the same period in 2016.

Overall, government figures estimate that there are between 10,000 and 13,000 victims of slavery in the UK. Victims are referred to the National Referral Mechanism, the UK's framework for supporting victims.

The LGA, which represents 370 councils and all fire and rescue authorities in England and Wales, is calling for a "coherent, cross-sector" approach to tackling modern slavery. Council leaders are also urging the public to familiarise themselves with tell-tale warning signs that could alert them to modern slavery happening in their local area.

see also [Tackling modern slavery: a council guide](#), December 2017

See also: [Modern slavery training: resource page, GOV UK](#)

## Government provides extra £29m for councils supporting child refugees (16/01/18)

An additional £29m will be shared between all local authorities currently supporting more than 10 asylum-seeking children, [the government has announced](#).

Additional government funding is to be provided to councils caring for more than 10 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The Department for Communities and Local Government said the funding will enable councils to provide homes for asylum-seeking children that are currently resident in other local authorities that are operating at full capacity.

So-called "gateway authorities" where there is an airport or seaport, such as Kent County Council, have faced major pressure in recent years due to increased numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children presenting in their areas. A voluntary national transfer scheme was launched in July 2016 in England to relieve pressure on areas with high numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Since the scheme was introduced, more than 550 children have been transferred between English councils, however, a number of local authorities have withdrawn from it amid criticism of the level of funding the Home Office is making available for those taking part.

See also: [Modern slavery training: resource page, GOV UK](#)

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## Screening

### NHS population screening: regional quality assurance teams in England (18/01/18)

These [documents](#), from Public Health England (PHE), sets out the roles and contact details for the 4 regional quality assurance teams for NHS population screening in England. The regions are: North, South, Midlands and east, and London.

The purpose of these regional teams is to:

- assess the quality of population screening services, including through peer review
- give expert advice during the management of screening incidents
- provide daily support to commissioners and screening programme providers
- work with providers and commissioners to improve equitable access to screening

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## Sexual Health

### Sexually transmitted infections (STIs): managing outbreaks (18/01/18)

Public Health England (PHE) has published [guidance](#) on how to investigate and manage STI outbreaks. It replaces previous guidance produced by the Health Protection Agency, now PHE. The guidance is provided primarily for health protection professionals at local, regional and national level.

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## Social Care/Welfare

### King's Fund: Making sense of accountable care (18/01/18)

In this [long read](#) for the King's Fund Chris Ham states that it has been clear for some time that simply working the current hospital-based model of care harder to meet rising demand is not the answer. Rather, the NHS needs to work differently by providing more care in people's homes and the community and breaking down barriers between services.

The NHS also needs to give greater priority to the prevention of ill health by working with local authorities and other agencies to tackle the wider determinants of health and wellbeing. This means tackling risk factors such as obesity and redoubling efforts to reduce health inequalities. Limited progress has been made in fully engaging the public in changing lifestyles and behaviours that contribute to ill health and in acting on the recommendations of the Marmot report and other reviews to improve population health.

### Almost a quarter of large provider care homes are inadequate or require improvement (19/01/18)

Which? ranks the largest providers of residential care homes for people over 64. The [charity examined](#) the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection ratings for 54 providers who run at least 12 residential homes that care exclusively for people aged 65 and over.

Of the 1,917 homes examined 24% required improvement or were inadequate. The CQC's recent [State of Health Care and Adult Social Care report](#) puts the figure for all residential homes at 18%, but that figure includes services that cater for a wider age group or younger adults.

Which? is currently running a care homes campaign calling on the government to improve the choice and quality in residential care.

### Care and Health Improvement Programme Efficiency project (18/01/18)

In 2016/17 the Local Government Association (LGA) worked alongside 10 councils that proposed a range of innovative solutions to assist in achieving greater efficiencies from their adult social care budgets. The projects that were being run by councils could be described under three main headings:

- managing demand for social care by offering residents a different type of service
- more effectively using the capacity in communities to help find new care solutions
- working closer with partners in the NHS to reduce pressures in the care and health system.

This [report](#) looks at the ten projects and draws conclusions as to what other councils might learn from them. The findings will be of interest to directors and assistant directors of adult social care, heads of service or transformation, or change managers leading projects to develop more efficient and sustainable approaches.

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## Workforce Development

### Health Education England mandate: 2017 to 2018 (17/01/18)

The [mandate to Health Education England](#) (HEE) sets out the government's objectives for HEE to provide healthcare education and training. For April 2017 to March 2018. It looks at how to develop the healthcare workforce to improve care for patients through education and training.

It reflects strategic objectives around workforce planning; health education; training and development

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