

**Welcome to The Patients Association Weekly  
News**



With 2016 now drawing to an end, the Patients Association has been getting ready for 2017 and the exciting developments that the New Year holds.

As we hope you have noticed, we have a brand-new look. The Patients Association's vision includes a commitment to improve and innovate and, in this spirit, we hope you like our new branding as much as we do.

The Patients Association is excited to announce the launch of our new website, which can be viewed here: <https://www.patients-association.org.uk/>.

We have now launched our new-look rebrand and with it, our new website, which contains a number of new features and interactive content. What do you think of it? Do you like the new refreshed design, did you find everything you were looking for and what could we do to keep improving? We would value your feedback on the website and invite you to share your comments by completing our survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/3983XH7>.

We will be sending out more information about our plans for 2017 in the New Year. In the meantime, we send our warmest wishes.

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## 2016 IN REVIEW

2016 has been another successful year for the Patients Association in championing the voice of patients within the National Health Service. Here are some of our key highlights from the past twelve months.

### Feeling the Wait – Waiting Times Report 2016

Earlier in the year, the Patients Association released its sixth annual report entitled '*Feeling the Wait - Waiting Times Report 2016*', investigating hospital waiting times for elective surgical procedures in England. The report highlighted that on the whole, waiting times are continuing to get worse and that there are great regional variations in waiting times across England. You can read the full report [here](#).

### All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Patient Safety

In 2016, our [APPG](#) on Patient Safety focused on antimicrobial resistance and infections acquired within a clinical setting. It was the subject of our '[Patient Safety Issue](#)' report in May and our recently published '[Time to Act: Inquiry into Hospital-Acquired Infections and Antimicrobial Resistance](#).'

### Party Conference Season

During the party conference season in October, the Patients Association provided analysis of the [Labour](#), [Conservative](#) and [Liberal Democrat](#) health policies.

[Norman Lamb](#) MP announced in his [speech](#) that the Liberal Democrats would be establishing an independent expert panel, called the “new Beveridge group”, to advise the party on the case for a separate NHS and care tax. In his speech, he identified [Katherine Murphy](#), Chief Executive of the Patients Association, as one of the experts involved in this new panel. The Patients Association is excited to be involved with this panel and to follow the developments of potential funding options for healthcare into the New Year.

### New Chair Appointed

In December, the Patients Association was very pleased to announce the appointment of its new Chair: [Liz McAnulty](#). Liz has been a Trustee of the Patients Association for three years and takes over from Dr. [Mike Smith](#), who held the role of Chair since 2013. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Mike for his contribution to the association as Chair over the past three years and look forward to his continued work as he remains a Trustee.

On her election, Liz said: “I feel honoured and privileged to have been elected to the role of Chair of the Patients Association at what is an important and exciting time for the charity.”

## KEY REPORTS OF 2016

[A discussion on novel biologic and biosimilar medicines](#)

[Time to Act: Inquiry into Hospital-Acquired Infections and Antimicrobial Resistance](#)

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## HEALTH SECRETARY LAUNCHES NATIONWIDE SEPSIS CAMPAIGN

The Rt. Hon. [Jeremy Hunt](#) MP, Secretary of State for Health, has launched a nationwide [campaign](#) to help parents spot symptoms of [sepsis](#) in children. Sepsis arises as a complication of infections and claims 37,000 lives every year in England. The campaign aim is to provide parents and carers of young children, up to four years of age, with the information and knowledge necessary to spot the signs of sepsis.

Mr. Hunt said: “We need to get far better at spotting [sepsis] across the NHS. By raising awareness and improving clinical practice we will save lives in the fight against this horrible illness.”

Melissa Mead is an ambassador for the [UK Sepsis Trust](#). Melissa said: “Sepsis is a cruel, ruthless condition which doesn't discriminate and can affect anyone. I hope this campaign reaches as many people as possible, so all parents out there know about sepsis and how serious it can be.”

Millions of leaflets and posters, developed by the Department of Health and the Royal Colleges, are being issued to GP surgeries and hospitals for distribution to new parents. The government is also working with [Public Health England](#) and the UK Sepsis Trust to deliver the campaign in an effort to tackle the condition that affects more than 120,000 children in England a year.

[Sir Bruce Keogh](#), National Medical Director for [NHS England](#), said: “This campaign is an important addition to our ongoing work - we will never treat sepsis in time unless everyone 'thinks sepsis'.”

[Katherine Murphy](#), Chief Executive of the Patients Association, welcomes the campaign and believes it is an important step in raising awareness and helping parents identify and act upon the signs of sepsis. Katherine said: “Sepsis is a cruel and indiscriminate disease. The symptoms must be highlighted so that parents can spot them and seek urgent medical assistance.”

Parents should call 999 or take their child to A&E if they display any symptoms of [sepsis](#). The symptoms include the child's skin looking mottled, bluish or pale and abnormally cold to touch, a rash that does not fade when you press it; the child being lethargic or difficult to wake, breathing very quickly, or having fits and convulsions.

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## HOSPITALS TOLD TO STOP 'MOST' OPERATIONS OVER CHRISTMAS TO REDUCE A&E PRESSURES



[The Telegraph](#) has reported that hospitals have been ordered to divert thousands of patients from Accident & Emergency departments in an unprecedented step to help stave off a winter crisis.

According to [HSJ](#), acute trusts have been told to “cease most inpatient elective activity” over Christmas and significantly reduce bed occupancy, in order to free up capacity and try to avoid further deterioration in emergency care.

A letter sent to trusts from [NHS Improvement](#) asks all acute providers to aim to cut their general and acute bed occupancy to 85 per cent between December 19 and January 16. In doing so, it is hoped it will enable providers to accommodate anticipated increases in non-elective surgery demand during this period and to maintain that position for as long as is practical.

The NHS Improvement letter is dated 9 December and was sent on behalf of Chief Executive [Jim Mackey](#) and the National Accident and Emergency Improvement Board. [HSJ](#) quoted the letter: “In preparing for managing winter pressures, it is recommended that all providers ‘pace’ their elective work by introducing elective breaks where trusts cease most in patient elective activity and focus on treating emergency activity and non-admitted patients.”

[Chris Hopson](#), Chief Executive of NHS Providers, said: “This guidance does go further than before (for example, in specifying a target bed occupancy level as the holiday period starts), but it’s in line with direction of travel over the last few years, prioritising emergency over elective work for the holiday period.

Katherine Murphy, Chief Executive of the Patients Association, was quoted in [The Telegraph](#). She said: “It’s really worrying to see these sort of 11th hour steps when we have seen this crisis coming for so long. We do need measures to ease pressure on A&E, but where are they going to find the staff to run these services, when the whole system is so over-stretched?”

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## HOSPITAL TRUSTS TO RECEIVE POOR CQC INSPECTION RATINGS FOR FAILING TO INVOLVE FAMILIES IN AVOIDABLE DEATH INVESTIGATIONS

The Rt. Hon [Jeremy Hunt](#) MP, Secretary of State for Health, has told hospital trusts that a failure to involve families properly in the investigation of avoidable deaths may result in them receiving a poor Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection rating.

This follows the [report](#) released last week by the CQC into NHS death investigations. The

report found widespread inconsistency in investigations of avoidable deaths by NHS trusts across the country. The report also found that patients' relatives are being left in the dark during investigations about patient deaths.

In response to this report, the government has said that trusts will be required to follow a new standardised methodology and publish the number of avoidable deaths that occur at their hospitals.

Mr. Hunt said that "facing up to the problem of avoidable deaths was one of the most important reforms since he took on the role of health secretary in 2012." Mr. Hunt continued: "It is vital for families to be properly involved in investigations about the death of loved ones if they wish to be. It is for that reason that family involvement in NHS investigations of avoidable deaths will be assessed by the CQC as part of its domain."

Mr. Hunt was also keen to emphasise that these new measures were not about knocking the NHS. He noted that as reporting processes improved and trusts started to implement a national methodology, the number of avoidable deaths reported would inevitably rise, and stated that no one would be penalised for this. He stressed that the government would not be imposing any targets on providers, nor would they compare trusts' results as part of the reporting of deaths.

Mr. Hunt said that trust managers who were worried about their resources and budgets should welcome the new measures as they would reduce costs. He stated that poor care is the most expensive care trusts can give and that by learning to eliminate tragedies we will also eliminate a lot of the costs.

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## NEWS FROM THE HELPLINE

A caller rang our Helpline. She has two hernias and was seeking surgery. She also has a pacemaker and was informed by her consultant that they would have to consider whether to proceed with the hernia treatment due to her heart condition.

The consultant has now informed her that he has referred her for an Individual Funding Request. The caller was seeking information about this and its possible implications for her treatment.

The Patients Association contacted NHS England for further information. NHS England's Customer Service Team advised us that the Individual Funding Request is a process whereby a panel of clinicians at the hospital will review her records and treatment options in order to assess the patient's needs. The panel will then make a determination as to whether the surgery is the most appropriate treatment. We advised the patient that if she is dissatisfied with the outcome, she may appeal. The caller has been encouraged to call our Helpline again if she needs any further assistance.

[Contact our Helpline team today](#)

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## WHY NOT MAKE A GIFT TO THE PATIENTS ASSOCIATION THIS CHRISTMAS?

Each month, the Patients Association Helpline takes hundreds of calls from patients or their families on a broad range of health and social care issues. The advice we give may range from something as simple as advising on one of the many complex complaints procedures throughout the health and social care system, or it could be providing casework support to a family whose loved one has suffered very poor care.

In listening to patients, carers and their families, we provide them with the strength, courage and expert knowledge to navigate the complexities of their case. We also speak up for needed change to health and social care on behalf of patients. We achieve this by leading two All Party Parliamentary Groups, one on Patient Safety and one on Patient and Public Involvement, through our policy work and by lobbying at all levels of government.

As an independent charity, our work would be impossible without the support of our generous donors. Each year we rely on the support of people, like you, to support us in fighting for change, and in dealing with the thousands of calls for our help. By making a donation to the Patients Association, you could help ensure that those who desperately need our support receive it.

With a donation you could help to ensure that this winter, whilst increased pressure is placed on the NHS, those that need our help and guidance can get it, and that no phone call is left unanswered, or story unheard.

[Donate now](#)

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## What our team are reading this week

[Hospitals ordered to divert patients from overstretched A&Es](#)

[Exclusive: Hospitals told to stop 'most' operations over Christmas](#)

[Overseas patients leave NHS bill of almost £30 million in one year](#)

[Hospital, CCG and GP consolidation mooted by STP](#)

[Labour writes to government about social care crisis](#)

### About Us

**The Patients Association's mission is to listen to patients and to speak up for change.**

Our vision is for health and social care services that provide high quality and safe care, where patients and their carers are valued as expert partners and recognised as individuals. And for a health system that is compassionate, accessible and inclusive for everyone that seeks to improve and innovate.

Likewise, we want to see a culture where transparency thrives, patients, their families, carers and staff are empowered to raise concerns and make complaints to contribute to a better and safer healthcare system. We believe this should be an accountable system where this feedback is valued and acted upon.



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