NHS Monthly Insight Report

August 2025

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Introduction

'The Internal Audit Network' (TIAN) comprises the seven NHS internal audit consortiums and in-house teams operating across England. These organisations collaborate across a number of areas to leverage their collective knowledge and expertise and drive efficiency and effectiveness. This monthly insight report produced by TIAN highlights key publications and is intended as a useful update and reference tool for our clients.

Developments in the NHS	
NHS England - Clustering arrangements	Clustering arrangements for integrated care boards (ICBs) have been agreed by NHSE's Executive team and by ministers. The agreed clusters will be implemented during Q3 of 2025/26 but not every ICB is involved in clustering arrangements. While clustering ICBs will work together through shared leadership and combined teams, they will remain separate legal entities. https://www.england.nhs.uk/integratedcare/integrated-care-in-your-area/more-about-each-integrated-care-system/ **For information**
NHS England – Provider Capability Assessment Guidance	Guidance and resources on the provider capability assessment thread of the NHS Oversight Framework have been published. These documents support NHS boards in assessing their organisation's capability on an annual basis against a range of expectations across 6 areas. Trusts must return the completed self-assessment and associated evidence (eg board paper) to their regions by 5pm on 22/10/25. https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/assessing-provider-capability-guidance-for-nhs-trust-boards/ **For information and action by all NHS Trusts**
Nursing and Midwifery Council - Principles for supporting women's choices in maternity care	These principles have been developed in response to a changing maternity landscape, with more women seeking personalised care and, in some cases, making choices outside standard care pathways. Grounded in real-world practice, these evidence-based principles provide supportive information for midwives and employers navigating complex care scenarios. This will help ensure professionals can support women's individual choices while delivering safe, high-quality, person-centred care in line with the NMC code and standards. https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/guidance/principles-for-supporting-womens-choices-in-maternity-care/ **For information**
Health Services Safety Investigations Body - An exploratory review of maternity and neonatal services	This report is a summary of information collected during an exploratory review of maternity and neonatal services in spring 2025. This review involved meetings with 17 stakeholders and a review of 35 safety concerns submitted to the HSSIB. https://www.hssib.org.uk/patient-safety-investigations/an-exploratory-review-of-maternity-and-neonatal-services/summary-report/ **For information**
Health Services Safety Investigations Body - Medication not given: discharge from an acute hospital to the community	Medication is the most common intervention for patients in the NHS. In the most serious cases, delayed and missed medication can cause catastrophic effects. This report highlights the importance of information sharing between services to ensure patients are confident in medication self-administration. https://www.hssib.org.uk/patient-safety-investigations/medication-related-harm/third-investigation-report/ **For information**

Developments in the NHS	
Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman - Promoting a just culture	This guide sets out how to develop an organisation-wide culture that openly welcomes complaints and is accountable when mistakes happen. It explains how to embed the most important cultural values that encourage colleagues to: - view complaints as a vital tool for getting feedback from the people who use your service; and - use this feedback to improve colleagues' and organisational performance. https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/organisations-we-investigate/complaint-standards/uk-central-government-complaint-standards/uk-central-government-good-complaint-handling-guides/promoting-just-culture **For information**
Public Policy Projects - Operationalising value-based procurement	This report highlights how value-based procurement could revolutionise NHS care by improving outcomes and efficiency, but warns that entrenched budgeting practices, fragmented decision-making, and unclear definitions of value are blocking progress. It concludes that reform efforts must focus on long-term impact rather than short-term cost-cutting to unlock the full benefits for patients and the NHS. https://publicpolicyprojects.com/value-based-procurement-offers-transformative-opportunities-for-nhs-but-cultural-and-financial-reform-essential-for-success/ **For information**
The Health Foundation - Leading NHS groups: findings from interviews with group leaders in England	For a growing number of NHS trusts, group membership is seen as a means of delivering economies of scale and greater standardisation and reliability. Group membership can also hold appeal as it brings trusts under the umbrella of a central leadership team that is often highly experienced. This analysis focuses primarily on the leadership of NHS groups. Based on interviews with group leaders, it examines two key leadership roles: the group chief executive and the site leader (sometimes referred to as site chief executive or managing director). These roles exemplify one of the critical differences between the management of groups and NHS trusts: the division of strategic and operational leadership between a central group and local site-based leadership teams. https://www.health.org.uk/reports-and-analysis/analysis/leading-nhs-groups **For information**
NHS Providers - NHS activity tracker: August 2025	Every month, NHS England publishes data relating to demand, activity, waiting times and national performance against constitutional standards and recovery targets across the secondary care sector. The NHS activity tracker delves into these statistics in more detail to provide an overview of what it happening at a national and trust level and across the acute, ambulance, community and mental health sectors. https://nhsproviders.org/resources/nhs-activity-tracker-august-2025 **For information**
NHS Providers - Making commissioning strategic	The idea of ICBs becoming strategic commissioners has been under development since late last year. As the 10 Year Health Plan sets out, ICBs will be tasked with improving population health outcomes setting a long-term, evidence-informed strategy and ensuring resources are allocated effectively. This briefing explores how a more strategic approach to commissioning can benefit patients and communities and how providers are central to its success. https://nhsproviders.org/resources/making-commissioning-strategic **For information**
NHS Employers - Sickness absence toolkit	NHS Employers has published a toolkit giving guidance to NHS managers about supportively managing sickness absence. The guidance is designed to support line managers to have both confidence and consistency every step of the way when it comes to supporting

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	colleagues with conversations about sickness absence.
	https://www.nhsemployers.org/toolkits/sickness-absence-toolkit
	For information
NHS Providers - Navigating AI: practical questions for NHS leaders to ask	As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly embedded into clinical pathways and new models of care, NHS leaders play a critical role in ensuring safe and ethical implementation that drives benefits for patients and staff. This toolkit is designed to support conversations at each stage of the journey from considering using AI through to implementing solutions into business-as-usual workflows. https://nhsproviders.org/resources/navigating-ai-practical-questions-for-nhs-leaders-to-ask **For information**
Care England - The current state of dementia diagnosis and care	Care England, in partnership with Dementia Forward and care providers, conducted a national survey to capture the experiences of people living with dementia, their families and care staff. This report highlight gaps and inequalities in the dementia care pathway and outlines a set of policy recommendations in response. The report includes case studies which highlight the current flaws of the current system, while offering a range of solutions to ensure all those on the dementia care pathway are supported through pre and post diagnosis, without waiting for crisis before action occurs. https://www.careengland.org.uk/the-current-state-of-dementia-diagnosis-and-care-in-england/ **For information**
Information Commissioner's Office – Disclosing Documents guidance, and FOI compliance in the NHS	Following a number of high-profile problems in this area the ICO has issued new guidance on disclosing documents. This includes practical steps and how-to videos to help organisations understand how to check documents for hidden personal information and reduce the risk of a data breach. The guidance will help organisations ensure that when documents are disclosed to the public, it is done so securely, minimising the risk of accidental breaches of personal information. The guidance will help in any scenario where you need to check documents for hidden personal information before disclosing them to the public or a specific member of the public. For example, when: • publishing documents online; • sending a document to a customer; or • responding to an information request (eg organisations may disclose documents to a specific member of the public when responding to a subject access request (SAR) under data protection legislation, and public authorities may disclose documents to the wider public under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/security/disclosing-documents-to-the-public-securely/ The ICO has also added to their library of FOI case studies with one about how NHS Informatics Merseyside have built a network to improve practice. The FOI team at NHS Informatics Merseyside won Team of the Year at the eCase FOI25 awards. The team provides FOI services to Mersey Care NHS FT which has around 12,500 employees, and it achieved 98% average compliance during 2024. The case study demonstrates the benefits of effective networking to support good practice within the organisation and beyond. https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/foi/case-studies/nhs-informatics-merseyside-networking-for-a-wider-impact/ The ICO has ordered four other NHS trusts to take immediate steps to improve their FOI compliance due to extensive backlogs. As part of this they have issued three practice recommendations and one enforcement notice. https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/media-centre/news-and-blogs/2025/07/successes-and-setbacks/

Developments in the NHS	
	For information and implementation/consideration
Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology - Geographical differences in healthy life expectancy	Healthy life expectancy (HLE) is the average number of years that somebody can expect to live in good self-reported health. Years lived in poor health reduce quality of life, increase demand on healthcare services, and have wider economic effects, such as reduced ability to work.
	HLE varies widely across England. It is linked to the conditions in which people are born, live and work. More deprived areas are more likely to have lower HLE. In 2021–2023, there was a 17.9 year gap in HLE between Blackpool (52.3 years) and Wokingham (70.2 years). The local authority gap in HLE has increased from 14.8 years in 2011–2013 to 17.9 years in 2021–23.
	The government's 2025 Fit for the future: 10 Year Health Plan includes aims to shift from "treatment to prevention" and from "hospital to community". The 10 Year Health Plan pledges to improve HLE for all citizens and halve the gap between the richest (South East) and poorest (North East) regions of England.
	https://post.parliament.uk/research-briefings/post-pb-0067/
	For information
House of Commons Library - NHS productivity	This briefing sets out how and why health care productivity is measured, reflecting different views on what should be measured and what different measures mean. It also lays out recent trends in NHS productivity, the explanations given for these trends and outlines the potential changes that have been proposed to increase productivity.
	https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10313/
	For information
House of Commons Library - NHS winter preparedness	Winter remains a critical stress point for the NHS in England, especially for accident and emergency and ambulance services. This briefing looks at some of the reasons there are additional pressures on the NHS during the winter, and how the NHS in England seeks to address this, ensuring hospitals can cope through the colder months. It focusses on some of the pressures identified in winter 2024/25, and the plans for the NHS in England to prepare for winter 2025/26.
	https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10320/
	For information
CIFAS - Fraud on the rise: record filings continue into 2025	CIFAS recently released their new Fraudscape 6-Month Update. This latest update reveals a record-breaking number of fraud cases recorded in the first half of 2025, surpassing even the previous high set in 2024. To mark the launch, they hosted an exclusive webinar, which is now available to watch on demand at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKh8C5tW0lc. In the session, Cifas experts presented the key findings from the report, provided an overview of the current fraud landscape, and explored emerging fraud trends, offering insight into what these developments could mean for the remainder of the year.
	https://www.fraudscape.co.uk/
	For information
HFMA – NHS Corporate Governance Map	The HFMA NHS corporate governance map has been updated, with items added since the last update marked as new. The map brings together the key guidance and models to support effective corporate governance within the NHS. Robust governance policies and procedures must be in place, and regularly evaluated, to ensure they remain fit for purpose. Aimed at NHS boards, governing bodies, audit committees and those NHS staff with an interest in governance, the purpose of the NHS corporate governance map is to highlight the published resources that support the development and maintenance of effective governance arrangements.
	The map is split into four sections: strategic framework; enabling good governance; specific areas for assurance; and devolved nations. It

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	signposts the key model documents and guidance available, and when they were last updated.
	https://www.hfma.org.uk/publications/nhs-corporate-governance-map
	For information

Disclaimer: This briefing paper is intended to highlight recent developments and issues within the NHS that may be of interest to non-executive directors, lay members and NHS managers. It is not exhaustive and TIAN cannot be held responsible for any omission.