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UK Prison Health IT System Launched

Healthcare staff in prisons will be better placed to tackle the challenging health needs of prisoners as a result of a national prison healthcare IT system now installed in all prisons and young offender institutions across England.

All clinicians now have ready access to up to date medical information making it less likely that the physical and mental health needs of prisoners and young offenders go undetected. Early intervention and preventative care will improve as healthcare staff have round the clock access to prisoners' medical history and current conditions at multiple sites within a prison.

Prisoners will also benefit from improved continuity of care as they move between prisons, with medical records immediately and securely transferred from one prison to another. And staff are having to spend less time on administrative tasks – freeing up their time to concentrate on patient care.

Over 5,000 healthcare staff are using the system at 136 English prisons and young offender institutions, including three immigration centres where the NHS is responsible for healthcare. The final prison to go operational with the system was HMP Feltham at the end of last month.

Paul Burstow, Care Services Minister said:

“This provides a firm foundation to take offender health forward in a digital age. The ability to access prisoners’ medical records when they are needed, from the first moment that they are received into a prison, is crucial to the delivery of effective healthcare.

“This system is a worthwhile investment that will support healthcare professionals working in prisons in their very challenging roles.”

Louis Appleby, National Clinical Director for Health in Criminal Justice said:

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“For healthcare staff working in this demanding field, using the same kind of technology that’s already established in general practice is crucial to improving their ability to provide safe and effective care.

“Prisoners usually have complex and multiple healthcare problems, which are treated by different members of the healthcare team, so the system has a major role to play in supporting team-working and ensuring healthcare professionals are sighted on all aspects of the treatment being provided.”

Sir Keith Pearson, Chair, National Advisory Group for Health and Criminal Justice said:

“Effective information sharing is key to tackling the challenging healthcare needs of the offender population, and ensuring they get access to the right treatment, when they need it. This system in prisons sets the bar for ongoing work needed to improve the quality of data, records and information sharing right across the criminal justice system, in direct support of partnership working and the systematic assessment of a person's health needs. Improved continuity of care means that fewer people will fall through the cracks.”

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