

# Fund social care 'or NHS billions will be wasted'

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The extra £20.5 billion for the NHS will be wasted without proper funding for social care, the Care Quality Commission has warned.

Almost half of A&E departments were failing because of deep-rooted problems with health and social care services in their area, the watchdog said in its annual report, adding that there were blackspots where patients face "care injustice" and struggle to access good services.

In June Theresa May promised an extra £20.5 billion a year of NHS funding by 2023-24, saying that the health service needed to plan how the money would transform services.

However, the CQC said that the money would be swallowed up treating people in hospital who should be in the community unless there was a similar injection of funds into adult social care.

Peter Wyman, its chairman, said: "It is increasingly clear without a long-term funding settlement for adult social care, the additional funding for the NHS will be spent treating people with complex conditions for whom care in the community would have been more effective both in terms of their health and wellbeing and use of public money." The government has promised a green paper on social care, expected this year.

Overall, the watchdog's report said that service quality had been maintained or even improved year on year, but that "access to this care increasingly depends on where in the country you live and the type of support you need".

Research by Age UK shows that 1.4 million older people do not have access to the care and support they need, while waiting times are rising and many mental health patients have to travel long distances for care.

The CQC said that many areas were failing to embrace joined-up working between health and social care services. Finding and keeping staff was also a problem.

The watchdog said that safety remained "a real concern", with 40 per cent of NHS acute hospitals' core services and 37 per cent of NHS mental health trusts' core services requiring

## A&E receptionists ruling

A&E receptionists must not give misleading information to patients about waiting times, the Supreme Court has ruled (Chris Smyth writes). The judgment was made when the court reversed a decision not to award damages to Michael Darnley, then 26, who had gone to Mayday hospital in Croydon with a head injury in 2010.

Mr Darnley went home after being told that he would have to wait hours before anyone would see him. In fact the hospital's policy was that a triage nurse would assess anyone with a head injury within 30 minutes. Mr Darnley later collapsed with a haemorrhage and suffered permanent brain damage. The court decided that non-medical staff were covered by a hospital's duty of care and must not give "incomplete and misleading" information to patients. Damages will be decided later.

improvement on safety at the end of July. Nearly half of maternity and gynaecology services needed to improve. Hospital emergency departments were the most likely to be rated as requiring improvement or as inadequate, at 41 per cent and 7 per cent respectively.

A lack of access to other services, including GPs, community nursing and mental health support, was driving patients into hospitals.

The CQC highlighted four care blackspots, where the local hospital was failing and adult social care services were not performing up to the national average level, while there was also no good or outstanding alternative hospital within a 30-minute drive. These were the Isle of Wight, Kent, Portsmouth and the Wirral.

A spokeswoman for the Department of Health and Social Care said that it was "testament to our hardworking, dedicated NHS and social care staff that the vast majority of patients continue to receive good, safe care and many parts of the NHS have improved since this time last year".