**IN BRIEF**

Campaign group Action on Sugar has called for a ‘sugar tax’ to tackle UK childhood obesity rates and discourage young people from consuming food and drink with too much added sugar. The group has drawn up a seven-point action plan on childhood obesity, including a ban on marketing processed foods and drink targeted at children. Go to www.actiononsugar.org

Diabetes UK has warned of a postcode lottery for people who have diabetes, with huge variations in care quality depending on where they live. Figures from the charity’s ‘diabetes watch’ initiative reveal that only 18.5 per cent of people with diabetes in mid-Essex receive the eight annual health checks recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, compared with 78.3 per cent in the Stafford and surrounds clinical commissioning group area.

**United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust has launched a new ‘listening clinic’ where patients and the public can meet with the trust’s non-executive directors to share their comments and concerns. The trust was one of 11 organisations placed in special measures in July 2013 following a review into hospitals with higher than expected mortality rates by NHS England medical director Sir Bruce Keogh.**

Nurse absence rates have fallen over the past four years, yet the profession still has one of the highest staff sickness absence rates in the NHS, government figures reveal. Data shows that the average sickness rate for nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff in England in February 2014 was 5.03 per cent, down from 5.24 per cent in February 2010. Ambulance staff recorded the highest sickness rate in February at 6.86 per cent. Nursing and midwifery students had the lowest at 1.1 per cent.

**A device that could reduce the risk of blood clots in patients who are unable to use other prevention options has been supported by new National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance.** The geko device, which is fixed to the back of the knee joint, creates electrical impulses to stimulate a nerve in the leg, causing muscles to contract and so increasing the blood flow in the veins. This imitates changes in blood flow normally achieved by walking.

**A charity has launched a campaign to help people with type 2 diabetes manage their condition during Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting. The Stay Healthy During Ramadan campaign by Silver Star Diabetes will see doctors visiting mosques in the UK, during July. People will also be offered blood glucose tests.** See reflections page 30.

**Around 20,000 people in their sixties will be offered bowel cancer screening in Tayside, Fife, Grampian and Glasgow health board areas, as part of a pilot programme. The 15-minute colonoscopy procedure will allow a doctor or nurse to detect growths in the lining of the bowel that could become cancerous.**

**FEEDBACK TOOL HELPS IMPROVE TEAMWORK**

Nurse researchers at the Florence Nightingale School of Nursing and Midwifery have helped develop a tool that encourages multidisciplinary teams to work better together. The multidisciplinary team – feedback for improving team working (MD-FIT) tool uses 15-minute questionnaires to assess how well teams work together.

An independent assessor, who will be a nominated clinician or manager at the trust, also sits in on a team meeting and a feedback report is generated by combining the questionnaire responses and findings of the assessor. All team members then attend a one-hour discussion group to examine what could be done to improve the way they work together.

Developed by the Florence Nightingale School and King’s College London, the tool has been launched by Public Health England following testing at 20 NHS trusts across England. King’s College London lead researcher Cathy Taylor, who oversaw the project, said: ‘While there is a high level of agreement about the characteristics of effective multidisciplinary teams, until now there has been no structured way for teams to monitor their work.’

Go to tinyurl.com/mcv4g6n

**Change in shift patterns could prove beneficial to patients**

A hospital trust is testing new shift patterns in a bid to improve patient care.

Traditionally, some nurses have worked only day or only night shifts at Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust, but most will now be expected to work a mixture of long and short shifts, including nights.

The new model combines early shifts of 7am to 2.30pm, a late shift of 2pm to 9.30pm, a night shift of 7.30pm to 7.30am, and an early long shift of 7am to 8pm. The trust says the longer shifts will mean patients who have certain types of surgery will have the continuity of seeing the same nurse before and after their operation.

Grimsby Hospital charge nurse Ivan Bernal-Torne, who runs a gastroenterology ward, said: ‘This blend of short and long shifts will give us a real advantage in being able to increase our staffing flexibility on the ward and plan rotters that best suit patient need.’

Go to tinyurl.com/mcv4g6n