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STATEMENT – Thursday 8th May 2008

The Academy's response to the Health Select Committee inquiry into MMC

The Health Select committee's hard-hitting report of the inquiry into MMC makes a series of wide-ranging criticisms, most directed to the Department of Health.

Throughout the development and implementation of MMC senior members of the profession made persistent representations to individuals at the Department of Health, but as is indicated in the report, there was no clear ownership of the programme. The views and concerns of the individual colleges for the most part fell on deaf ears or on the ears of those who were unable to influence the direction of MMC. When the nature and scale of the MTAS disaster became apparent the Academy, by then under the chairmanship of Professor Dame Carol Black, acted promptly and decisively in demanding corrective action from Ministers.

There are however, serious and in some cases valid criticisms of the profession and its institutions.

While in the past the Academy was constructed as forum for discussion it has in the last eighteen months been responding vigorously to the increasing and changing demands being placed on the medical profession, not least by the shifting political landscape. Sir John Tooke's independent inquiry into MMC and today's Health Select Committee report both argue that the Academy review its purpose if it is to be an effective advocate for patients, doctors and the health service.

This report in particular, calls on the Academy to speak for the medical royal colleges where there is unanimity of purpose and intent especially on issues as fundamental as the education and training of doctors. While the Academy is of necessity a broad church, its members recognise the need to fulfil that role when unity is practical and a collective voice essential to influence change.

Lessons have been learned.