

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE BILL 2011

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (the Academy) promotes, facilitates and where appropriate co-ordinates the work of Medical Royal Colleges and their Faculties for the benefit of patients and healthcare.

The Academy has made clear its support for the principle of the Government's health service reforms, with the emphasis on quality outcomes and the greater engagement of clinicians.

Delivering these reforms whilst also seeking to find the £15-20bn of savings required from the NHS budget will pose a challenge for the NHS and risks diverting managerial and clinical focus. The Academy and Colleges remain concerned about the following issues in this Bill:

Wider involvement of clinicians in commissioning

It is essential that commissioning involves not only primary care doctors but also that secondary care clinicians and public health specialists are embedded in the process. This wider involvement will produce more informed and co-ordinated commissioning and better services for patients.

The Academy recognises that the Government has stated that it expects collaboration between GPs and secondary care colleagues. However, we believe that the Bill must be more robust in making this an unambiguous part of the whole commissioning process for both Consortia and the NHS Commissioning Board.

The Academy would support amendments to the NHS Commissioning Board Duty to obtain appropriate advice (Clause 19 Section 13G) and Consortia Duty to Seek Advice (Clause 21 Section 14O) or elsewhere to make this requirement explicit.

Competition, collaboration and integration

The Academy has serious concerns about possible risks to coherent, equitable healthcare provision brought about through the proposed market approach of "any willing provider". Our concerns over the pursuit of "any willing provider" are that price may override the quality and standard of care.

Organisational viability is generally contingent on the interdependencies between services. Removal of a service from a hospital or the community without careful planning and adjustment can weaken the complete cross-speciality care that has to be provided for patients with complex health needs. Specifically the Academy believes:

- The potential to have a number of providers delivering different parts of a whole pathway of care to different standards could make continuity of care and joined-up provision more difficult
- All providers must be effectively regulated and scrutinised consistently to ensure that they deliver equally high standards and quality of clinical care
- It is essential that the proposals for the Designation of Services (Clause 69) are robust and that clinicians are actively and explicitly involved in the process.



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Individual Royal Colleges and Faculties have produced specific briefings on relevant aspects of the Health and Social Care Bill and are available on the Academy website (www.aomrc.org.uk).