

Academy Council Policy Day

Summary of key issues

The Academy Council held its annual policy day on 18/19 September kindly hosted by the RCoA and the RCPCH. The purpose of the Policy Day is to provide an opportunity for the Council to consider a small number of key current issues in depth in a way that isn't generally possible at ordinary business meeting. This is also when the Council decides its policy priorities for the coming year.

The Academy also has its formal annual members meeting during the policy day when the Board of Trustees reports back to members on the governance of the Academy.

As the event is an opportunity for discussion we do not produce formal minutes of the meeting but the note below outlines the topics discussed

Quality Improvement

Mary Dixon-Woods, Director of The Healthcare Improvement Studies Institute [THIS Institute] gave a presentation on the work of THIS, of which the Academy is a partner. Mary questioned the value of many of the small scale individual improvement audit projects which trainee doctors are required to complete as part of their training progression and, instead, promoted participation in large scale intra- and cross-organisation projects. The session provided food for thought for how the Academy takes forward its work on quality improvement and patient safety. The ensuing discussion suggested that Colleges could promote trainee doctors to become involved with more general, larger audits by demonstrating preference for these for the ARCP process and for specialty application. It was also suggested that Colleges could set up networks for quality improvement projects, as they have done for research, or provide 'libraries' of activity to share.

Managing Winter and seasonal variation

Keith Willet, NHS England Director of Acute Care, and Taj Hassan, President of the RCEM, led a discussion on managing "winter pressures" and seasonal variation. It was recognised by everyone that pressures are now all year round and not simply a winter phenomenon. There was discussion of the recent trends and about when and where attention and funding should be focussed. There was complete agreement that if the huge difficulties faced by social care are not addressed the "winter pressures" will never be tackled. It was agreed to set up an Academy "Winter Reference Group" to monitor the position and provide input nationally. The Council will also seek closer engagement with social care.

Input to the NHS Plan

The Council welcomed informative presentations from NHS England on the current position on the NHS England Long Term Plan and engagement in the work programmes. Mathew Style, Director of Strategic Finance, spoke of the overall context of the review and Government expectations, Emil Hough, Director of Strategy described the various workstreams and Celia-Ingham-Clark, Medical Director for Clinical Effectiveness, spoke about clinical engagement and the clinical standards workstream.



This general discussion was followed by a session on the Workforce stream led by Ruth May, Executive Director of Nursing at NHS Improvement, and Wendy Reid, Director of Education and Quality at HEE. Workforce is, of course, a key priority for the Academy and colleges and there is broad agreement on issues around supply of all members of the clinical workforce but recognition that such solutions are not quick fixes.

Step-on/Step-Off training

Sheona Macleod, Chair of COPMED, and Bill Allum, RCS England, led a discussion on work being undertaken by COPMED and the Academy on making training more flexible to meet the needs of trainees. This focussed on the ability for easier “step-on/step-off” of training pathways. There was agreement that this flexibility had to be the right approach whilst recognising the practical difficulties this presents both for managing service and identifying the learning “gaps” which need to be filled when a doctor wants to step back into training.

Academy Priorities

The Council considered the Academy’s policy priorities for the coming year. The Academy Officers had proposed that the high-level priorities should remain unchanged from this year i.e. Workforce, Value and Resources, Education and Training, the Digital Agenda and Brexit. The Council endorsed this proposal and the suggested outline work programme to underpin the priorities with some amendments and suggestions which will be incorporated.

The Council also considered how it to input to work on women’s health and children and young people’s health issues and agreed that such workstreams were appropriate for Academy members and would be developed further by Lesley Regan [RCOG] and Russell Viner [RCPCH].

Academy Members Meeting

Charles Winstanley, Chair of the Academy Board of Trustees, reported on the Board’s activities over the past year and presented the annual Trustees report and accounts which have been approved by the external auditors.

The meeting was also shown the Academy 2018 annual review which has been prepared for members and external stakeholders. This can be accessed at <http://www.aomrc.org.uk/annual-review-2018/>