

RCOG policy briefing



Royal College of
Obstetricians
and Gynaecologists

Bringing to life the best
in women's health care

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RCOG briefing on the NHS Listening Exercise: accountability and patients

The issues

- The public believes that the NHS reform proposals will result in a cloaked decision-making process
- The public believes that the NHS reform proposals will result in the top-down allocation of resources and more bureaucracy with little or no patient engagement
- The public believes that the NHS reform proposals will result in less patient choice.

The arguments

These are issues of perception. In response to these claims, some of which are not unfounded because of the lack of clarity in the Health and Social Care Bill, the RCOG believes:

- That greater transparency in the way in which the NCB and GPCC will work will improve patient trust
- A clear demonstration of how GPCC will work with local authorities, HealthWatch groups and other third sector and patient organisations will improve patient trust
- A clear demonstration that non-NHS providers will not be allowed to choose which services to provide and are subject to regulation based on NHS quality standards will improve public trust
- All willing providers must demonstrate the added-value they provide in regular reports. Information should include clinical (at GPCC level) and local engagement, the partnerships formed and patient outcomes where possible
- All willing providers must demonstrate the social support structures they may have put in place to improve patient care and tackle social exclusion
- There is a danger that the bureaucracy to provide regulation for any willing providers might outweigh any economic benefits
- The dislocation of services through competition will significantly destabilise teaching and training for all staff.

The main issue is the deadline of April 2013 for implementation of the GPCC. The Government should consider delaying full implementation until the results of the early implementer sites are available for comparison.

The RCOG's position

To help ensure appropriate governance and to instil public confidence in the system, the Government must:

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- Ensure clinical input in the NCB and in each GPCC
 - Ensure that a mechanism is in place for transparent and inclusive community involvement in Health and Wellbeing Boards, led by local authorities who have consulted community and patient groups
 - Ensure that the results for commissioning decisions undertaken are published openly
 - Ensure that women's health networks are set up as part of Integrated Care Commissioning. These networks must be linked to the public health agenda so that the totality of care can be provided
 - Ensure accountability for continuous care in women's health provided in non-clinical settings. This includes access to other related social services.

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