

21 September 2010

## NHS White Paper – Equity and excellence: Liberating the NHS

### Summary

The Committee are requested to consider the information provided in relation to the NHS White Paper and consider providing views for inclusion in the consultation response.

### Detail

1. On 12 July, the Department of Health published the NHS White Paper which contained proposals that would significantly alter the structure of the NHS, and its relationships with other organisations including Local Authorities.
2. The White Paper is attached at **Appendix 1**. The main proposals of the White Paper can be briefly summarised as follows:
  - GP Consortia to be responsible for commissioning the majority of NHS services by 2012-13, replacing PCTs;
  - A national NHS Commissioning Board to oversee and allocate budgets to consortia, commission dentistry, community pharmacy, and primary ophthalmic services, and commission national and regional specialised services;
  - Local Authorities to become responsible for local public health improvement, using a dedicated public health budget, and the joint appointment of a Director of Public Health with a newly created national Public Health Service;
  - The establishment of Local Health and Wellbeing Boards, by councils, that would be responsible for promoting integration between health and social care (and other services), producing the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments, and 'building partnership' for service changes;
  - The replacement of LINKs by Healthwatch. Local Healthwatch will have an expanded role compared to LINKs and will cover NHS complaints advocacy services, advice and information for patients, and supporting patients in their right to exercise choice (eg. when choosing a GP);
  - Monitor, currently the independent regulator of foundation trusts, will become the 'economic regulator' of all NHS providers.

3. The White Paper, and supporting documents, are currently open to public consultation. The supporting document entitled *Local democratic legitimacy in health* is attached at **Appendix 2**. This goes into more detail on the functions of the proposed Health and Wellbeing Boards, and summarises these as follows:

- 'to assess the needs of the local population and lead the statutory joint strategic needs assessment;
- to promote integration and partnership across areas, including through promoting joined up commissioning plans across the NHS, social care and public health;
- to support joint commissioning and pooled budget arrangements, where all parties agree this makes sense; and
- to undertake a scrutiny role in relation to major service redesign.'

The last point refers to the statutory powers of health scrutiny in relation to service re-configurations. The paper suggests a new role for the current health scrutiny forums in terms of scrutinising the actions of the local health board.

4. Members should also be aware of new guidance in relation to considering service re-designs in the interim period before permanent arrangements are put in place. The NHS has been advised that four tests need to be met before proposals will be approved. These are:

- support from GP commissioners;
- strengthened public and patient engagement;
- clarity on the clinical evidence base; and
- consistency with current and prospective patient choice.

5. Members should be aware of the session of the Health and Wellbeing Partnership that will be held immediately prior to the Health Select Committee, and will start at 2.30pm. The session will discuss the White Paper and a response to the consultation. Members of the Committee are invited to the Partnership.

6. In addition, as part of this item, Members are encouraged to reflect on the discussions held at the Partnership, and to consider views that they may wish to suggest for inclusion in the consultation response. Members may want to give particular reference to the questions that are included in the paper *Local democratic involvement in health*.

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