



NCT Policy Summary:

Our NHS our future: NHS next stage review - interim report¹

Health Minister Lord Darzi in October 2007 launched an initial vision for the NHS in England as part of efforts to ensure the highest quality of care for all. The interim report *Our NHS Our Future: NHS next stage review* sets out an emerging vision to develop 'a universally world-class NHS with greater influence placed in the hands of local NHS staff, and the use of the latest technological innovations'.¹

Summary of the main findings and recommendations

The vision for the NHS – a world class NHS

The report sets out a vision for the NHS based on 4 key principles:

- **Fairness** – equally available to all, taking full account of personal circumstances and diversity
- **Personalized service** – tailored to the needs and wants of each individual, especially the most vulnerable and those in greatest need, providing access to services at the time and place of their choice
- **Effectiveness** – focused on delivering outcomes for patients that are among the best in the world
- **Safety** – an NHS as safe as it possibly can be, giving patients and the public the confidence they need in the care they receive.

Recommended steps for immediate action prior to final report

1. Steps towards a fairer NHS

- The report refers to the Secretary of State for Health's strategy for reducing health inequalities and the challenge it sets for the NHS. This challenge relates to the original mission and values on which the NHS was founded.

2. Steps towards a personalized NHS

- The report recommends that patient choice be the central point around which all NHS funded care be based. It recommends that new resources be invested to bring new GP practices to those local

communities with highest levels of need. The first initial target is to provide practices within the 25% of PCTs with the poorest provision.

- Recommendations also include newly procured health centres in easily accessible locations offering all members of the local population a range of convenient services, even if they choose not to be directly registered with GPs in these centres.
- PCTs are recommended to introduce new measures to develop greater flexibility in GP opening hours, including the introduction of new providers. The overall aim is that the majority of GP practices will offer patients much greater choice of when to see a GP, extending hours into the evenings or weekend.

3. Steps towards an effective NHS

- The report recommends that a Health Innovation Council should be established.

4. Steps towards a safer NHS

- The report recommends the National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) be supported in establishing a single point of access for frontline workers to report incidents.
- To reduce rates of healthcare associated infections still further, the report recommends:
 - legislation to create a new health and adult social care regulator with tough powers, backed by fines, to inspect, investigate and intervene where hospitals are failing to meet hygiene and infection control standards;
 - further powers for matrons to report any concerns they have on hygiene direct to the new regulator
 - introduction of MRSA screening for all elective admissions next year, and for all emergency admissions as soon as practicable within the next three years.

5. Steps towards an accountable NHS

- The report recommends the publication of guidelines to make clear that:
 - change only be initiated when there is a clear and strong clinical basis
 - consultations proceed only where effective and early engagement with the public
 - resources are made available to open new facilities alongside old ones closing.
- Any proposals to change services will also be subject to independent clinical and managerial assessment prior to consultation through the Office of Government Commerce's Gateway review process.

The next steps in the review

The report states that the second stage of the Review will set out how to deliver the vision through a locally accountable NHS with change led by health and social care staff with the support of reformed systems.

For the second stage of the review, groups of health and social care staff will be established in every region of the country to discuss how best to achieve this vision. The staff will be drawn from eight areas of care:

- Maternity and newborn care
- Children's health
- Planned care
- Mental health
- Staying healthy
- Long-term conditions
- Acute care
- End-of-life care

The groups will be charged with listening to patients, the public and others to identify next steps using the best available evidence, and set out their plans to deliver on the vision.

NCT comment

There are no specific references to maternity services or care of the newborn in the immediate steps and recommendations. However, some of the principles with regards to fairness of access to services may improve access to services for those women accessing support through their GP. Given that there are no specific recommendations for increases in funding, changes in the delivery of local GP services will need to be carefully monitored to identify any impact on the quality of care or the delivery of other forms of care to women in areas where services are changing.

One key recommendation relating to maternity issues is the announcement of groups of NHS and social care staff in every region of the country, with maternity and newborn care being one of the areas of care referred to.

The NCT, via its local branches and maternity service representatives will have a key role to play in ensuring that the voices of service users are heard when groups are engaged in consultation and a further role in providing access to high quality evidence on which to base local policy and service recommendations.

Date for review: October 2008

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References:

1. Darzi A. *Our NHS our future: NHS next stage review - interim report*. London: Department of Health; 2007.
Available from: <http://www.ournhs.nhs.uk/2007/10/lord-darzi-laun.html>

The NCT wants all parents to have an experience of pregnancy, birth and early parenthood that enriches their lives and gives them confidence in being a parent.

Donations to support our work are welcome.