

REPORT OF THE REVIEW OF COMMISSIONING ARRANGEMENTS FOR SPECIALISED SERVICES

The Department of Health has now issued the report of the review of specialised services set up by Lord Warner under Sir David Carter's chairmanship last October. The Specialised Healthcare Alliance – as the representative of 39 patient-related organisations on the review group – warmly welcomes the report, which satisfactorily addresses its major concerns and paves the way for a marked improvement in the provision of medical care to many vulnerable people. The key now is to ensure that the report's recommendations are adopted in full and effectively implemented thereafter. In particular, the SHCA asks you to join it in backing:

1. A National Specialised Services Commissioning Group (NSSCG) to coordinate specialised services commissioning across all regional groups (see below) and to provide a framework within which binding commissioning decisions requiring pan-regional agreement can be made;
2. National commissioning to be conducted where appropriate by a sub-group of the NSSCG, the National Commissioning Group (NCG) using transparent and published criteria in providing advice to Ministers on designation;
3. Responsibility for determining the arrangements for all other specialised commissioning to be vested in ten Specialised Commissioning Groups (SCGs) aligned with the new Strategic Health Authority (SHA) boundaries and acting on behalf of all PCTs in the SHA area;
4. budgets for SCGs pooled from PCT allocations to promote robust, long-term commissioning arrangements and manage financial risk;
5. periodic designation of specific service providers to ensure quality and safety with strong patient and public input;
6. consultation with SCGs and the NCG when assessing Trusts for Foundation status with specialised services and thereafter when changes in specialised provision are proposed;
7. SCGs to work closely with their clinical networks to ensure that commissioning and investment plans support the delivery of integrated care;
8. the DH to initiate an immediate review of the Specialised Services National Definitions Set with a view to more balanced and consistent coverage with clear criteria for inclusion;
9. SCGs and the NCG to contribute annually to an NSSCG website giving details of their commissioning arrangements including contact details for the lead commissioner for each specialised service;
10. SHAs to ensure strong performance management of specialised services commissioning, ensuring that PCTs have appropriate arrangements in place for collaborative commissioning and that SCGs are working effectively.
11. performance assessment of PCT commissioning by the Healthcare Commission to include the commissioning of specialised services;
12. a higher profile for specialised services and their commissioning arrangements within and outside the NHS with commissioning given greater prominence in career options for managers and clinicians.

NB This is a highly abbreviated summary. Please read report for full details.