



Department
of Health

UK-wide healthcare professional regulation reform

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Why do we regulate healthcare professionals

- “The primary purpose of professional regulation is to ensure patient safety”

Liam Donaldson, Chief Medical Officer
Trust, Assurance and Safety
February 2007

How do we regulate?

- 1.5 million individuals, 32 professions, 9 regulators
- 54 professions covered by 23 assured voluntary registers
- Register of individuals
- Standards for education and training
- Standards of professionals
- Continuing fitness to practise
- Taking action where professionals do not meet the standards

What do we do well?

- Independence of the regulators – from Government and from the professions they regulate
- Setting standards for education and training and accrediting courses
- Setting standards for professionals
- Robust procedures for investigating, judging and taking action where there are concerns

What do we not do well?

- Complex and confusing to the public – who regulates which profession? To what standards?
- Focus is on concerns about practise – rigid approach, slow, confrontational, inconsistent between regulators
- Not enough support for the majority of professionals where there are no fitness concerns
- Professional regulation does not support workforce development and planning

What prevents effective regulation?

- No objective criteria for who should be regulated
- Too many regulatory bodies
- Fitness to practise processes are slow and inflexible
- Legislation is out of date and makes change difficult
- Traces of self-regulation

What do we want to achieve?

- improve the protection of the public from the risk of harm from poor professional practice
- support the development of a flexible workforce that is better able to meet the challenges of delivering healthcare in the future
- deal with concerns about the performance of professionals in a more proportionate and responsive fashion
- provide greater support to regulated professionals in delivering high quality care
- increase the efficiency of the system.

What are we proposing?

- Architecture
- From fitness to practise to professional support
- Improving the regulatory bodies

Architecture

- Who is regulated?
 - develop objective criteria for who is regulated and how
 - statutory, voluntary, no regulation
- Who are they regulated by?
 - how many regulatory bodies should there be?
 - which professional groups should they regulate?

From fitness to practise to professional support

- A full range of powers for all regulators to respond in the right way to concerns
- Ability to resolve less serious concerns more quickly
- A greater focus on the professional standards of all registrants
- Education and training
- Revalidation
- Continuing professional development
- Working with employers

Improving the regulatory bodies

- More joint working between regulators and other parts of the system
- Greater autonomy for regulators to set their own procedures
- Improved governance arrangements
- Registration fees

Next steps

- Consultation – this autumn/winter...