

UK - Liberating the NHS: Improving Outcomes for Patients

Detailed proposals for how the NHS will improve healthcare outcomes for patients and judge its success were set out in a public consultation by the Department of Health in July.

The White Paper *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS*, published on 12 July, explained the government's intention to create an NHS that is more responsive to patients' needs and achieves better outcomes that are among the best in the world.

A new framework has been proposed, which aims to refocus the NHS on the outcomes achieved for patients rather than the process targets of the past that had no clinical justification.

The framework includes a set of national outcome goals which patients and the public can use to judge the overall performance of the NHS and hold the government to account for progress. The framework and the national outcome goals will form a combined mechanism by which the Secretary of State for Health can hold the new NHS Commissioning Board to account for the outcomes it is securing for patients.

The consultation document suggests five outcome domains:

- Preventing people from dying prematurely;
- Enhancing the quality of life for people with long-term conditions;
- Helping people to recover from episodes of ill health or following injury;
- Ensuring people have a positive experience of care; and
- Treating and caring for people in a safe environment and protecting them from avoidable harm.

Of the new framework, Health Secretary Andrew Lansley said, "Instead of politically motivated targets which lack clinical evidence, we will measure the outcomes that are most important to patients and that are relevant to healthcare professionals. These will be backed up by authoritative, evidence-based quality standards that will ensure everyone understands how those outcomes can be achieved."

He also stressed the need for input from all those involved in the healthcare sector, "I want to hear the views of healthcare professionals, patients, carers and the public on how the new system should work, and what we should measure to ensure the NHS is focused on what is important to patients and what improves their overall experience of NHS care."

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