

FEEDBACK

OPINION

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Health Service Journal
Greater London House
Hampstead Road
London NW1 7EJ

Volume 121
Number 6267

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Vision required

The Specialised Healthcare Alliance is a coalition of 68 patient-related organisations supported by 10 corporate members, which campaigns on behalf of people with rare and complex conditions requiring specialised care.

We have responded positively to the government's proposals for reform, considering that the decision to place responsibility for specialised commissioning under the auspices of the NHS Commissioning Board holds out the prospect of remedying long-standing weaknesses with a robust and consistent approach to the provision of services.

Accordingly, we read last week's report on developing the NHS Commissioning Board with interest (news, pages 6-7, 7 July). In particular, while many have cautioned that specialised commissioning will be lost sight of as the board wrestles with the development of local groups, we have taken the view that in order to show leadership it will need to demonstrate first class standards in those areas for which it is directly responsible, most notably specialised services.

While recognising that the report might have been seen primarily as a means of informing and reassuring those outside the Richmond House bubble, we were therefore very disappointed by the almost total lack of content about how the board intends to address specialised commissioning.

In particular, the board needs to demonstrate that the historical tendency for people with rare and complex conditions to be overlooked will be addressed through clear, accountable, discretely funded arrangements, alongside mechanisms to ensure integration with the provision of much care at local level.

We are aware of and grateful for the huge amount of work that is going on in the NHS to address the challenge of improved specialised



'The tendency for people with rare and complex conditions to be overlooked must be addressed'

commissioning but, especially given the hectic pace of change, we also want to see this reflected by a clearly enunciated vision at the top.

Baroness Pitkeathley, chair, Specialised Healthcare Alliance

Smell burning?

St George's Healthcare trust sells its beds to a financial institution and leases them back in the same month that Southern Cross, which did essentially the same, collapses (news, page 11, 7 July).

Of course, we already know that its chair and chief executive will not be around to see the consequences of the fire sale of assets that this obviously desperate trust is engaged in, but surely there must be someone else in its senior management who reads the newspapers and will be around if it all goes pear shaped?

Professor Martin McKee, European centre on health of societies in transition, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

A clean start

As healthcare delivery evolves and prevention of healthcare-associated infection increasingly becomes a priority for health and social care providers, it has become clear that the role of infection prevention and control practitioners needs to develop in response.

In partnership with all four UK governments, Skills for Health and the Council of Deans, the Infection Prevention Society has created a set of competencies.

The framework is structured against the four domains within the advance practitioner toolkit for *Modernising Nursing Careers*:
● clinical practice (six competencies);
● education (four competencies);
● research (three competencies);
● leadership and management (four competencies).

Each competency is comprised of: a competency statement; performance indicators aligned to each statement; generic and specific knowledge, understanding and skills needed to meet the competency; alignment to Skills for Health, national occupational standards and the NHS knowledge and skills framework.

The competencies may be used in a variety of ways and by a range of professionals, from recently appointed infection prevention and control practitioners, to managers of healthcare services, educational commissioners and providers, as well as practitioners working at or near advanced level of practice.

Organisations which are looking to develop staff with the expertise to drive forward the infection prevention and control agenda will also find this framework a valuable tool.

The competency framework is available free in electronic format from the Infection Prevention Society at www.ips.uk.net.

Infection Prevention Society and the Steering Group