



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of LINKs MEMBERS

Patient & Public Involvement in Health & Social Care

Niall Dickson
Chief Executive
GMC
Regent's Place,
350 Euston Road,
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November 19th 2010

Dear Niall,

We have recently received your excellent document Revalidation: The Way Ahead and we would like to establish a mechanism for LINKs (HealthWatch) and NALM to play an active role in the revalidation process.

We are very concerned that neither NALM nor any LINKs in England responded to the consultation, and I think we need to share responsibility for the considerable failure to receive feedback from the statutory bodies set up to monitor health and social care. I am of course aware that LINKs contributed through other mechanisms, e.g. National Voice, but this is not adequate.

In their new role LINKs/Healthwatch will be much closer to the interface of the doctor:patient interaction and will have much better intelligence through both hard and soft data about the performance of doctors.

The position put by Picker is one that we would agree with:

“The patient’s experience is a core dimension of quality in health and should be positioned as a core dimension of doctor’s competence and performance.”

We also agree with the GMC that public involvement must be meaningful and robust – but it is not for the GMC to determine, or be the arbiter of what constitutes meaningful public involvement.

We acknowledge the value of high quality qualitative data provided by patients, but would extend this much further. For example we are encouraging LINKs to work with PPGs to develop ‘critiques’ of the performance of GPs locally, and we will work with local user groups and voluntary sector bodies, to collect data on the performance of doctors – especially where concerns have been raised.

What is of fundamental importance is that LINK/HealthWatch can work in collaboration with doctors locally and the GMC nationally to secure the most effective way of supporting the revalidation process.

When I met Peter Rubin last year described the work of NALM and the importance ensuring that LINKs members have good information about the role of the GMC. I said that LINK members wanted to know exactly what the GMC does, and how to discuss with the GMC issues that they need to understand in more detail. I emphasized the importance of NALM in enabling LINKs and their members to communicate across the country and the opportunities that this provided for the GMC in working with local LINKs and consulting them. I also suggested that the GMC should have a web page specifically targeted at LINKs. I think the consequences of not pursuing these proposals are now pretty clear.

Perhaps we could meet in the near future to examine these issues and plan a national meeting to bring LINKs and the GMC together to discuss revalidation.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Very best wishes

Malcolm Alexander
Chair