



# The Royal College of Pathologists

## THE HEALTHCARE AGENDA AND PATHOLOGY SERVICES IN ENGLAND

1. The Royal College of Pathologists has responsibilities for professional training, professional standards, quality assurance and patient welfare wherever and however a pathology service is delivered. The role of the College is independent of the provider of healthcare, whether publicly or privately owned.
2. The Department of Health (England) has several key initiatives likely to have a significant impact on pathology services during the next year. The College therefore recommends that all pathologists should be apprised of these developments and of the pace and direction of change so that they can influence and contribute constructively to such developments locally.
3. The Department of Health has several initiatives focusing on pathology services:
  - Pathology Modernisation led by Dr Ian Barnes (National Pathology Advisor) and Deirdre Feehan (Department of Health)
  - National Framework for Pathology Service Improvement led clinically by Professor John McClure (National Clinical Lead, Pathology Service Improvement) and working closely with the Department of Health's Pathology Modernisation Team
  - Diagnostics Branch (covering radiology, pathology and endoscopy) led by Keith Smith (Department of Health)
  - Independent Sector procurement led by Robert Alexander (Department of Health).
4. The NHS Modernisation Agency has collaborated with the Department of Health's Pathology Modernisation team to develop a National Framework for Service Improvement. This is an integral part of a programme of work to develop a national vision for diagnostic services. A new National Pathology Modernisation Group will support this work. The membership of the Group, announced on 2 August 2004, is listed in Annex A. According to the Department of Health, the Group's remit will be:
  - disseminating key messages on modernising pathology
  - advising the Department of Health on using funding resources for success
  - supporting sharing of good practice in pathology across the NHS

- networking with the Modernisation Agency and other key stakeholders to support redesign in pathology services
  - working with the diagnostics industry to support the uptake of new technology, new ways of working and effective point-of-care testing services.
5. The Department of Health's Diagnostics Branch, led by Keith Smith, is working in partnership with the Pathology Modernisation Team to coordinate and drive forward the modernisation of diagnostic services in England, principally to expand service capacity and reduce 'hidden waits' in the patient journey.
  6. The Department of Health's *Modernising Pathology Services* provides guidance on pathology service redesign and management to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of diagnostic services to patients.
  7. It is proposed that a National Pathology Service Improvement Team will provide expert advice and support to the pathology community in implementing the changes needed to modernise pathology. This will include the National Clinical Lead for Pathology Service Improvement, the National Pathology Advisor members of the Department of Health Modernisation Team, the Associate Director for Diagnostics from the Modernisation agency, the National Pathology Manager and data and administrative staff.
  8. Based on knowledge learnt from experience gained in other areas of the modernisation programme, five key factors have been demonstrated to deliver sustained improvement and will be required to support this programme:
    - engagement and commitment of clinicians and senior management as a whole team
    - dedicated time out for service improvement
    - a pathology-led service improvement programme
    - effective data collection
    - adequate resources including staff.
  9. The National Implementation Team at the Department of Health is tasked with considering new ways of delivering health care and supporting services. This Team is responsible for the Independent Sector Treatment Centre developments; it does not address pathology directly, but only where there is overlap in the delivery of the service to these centres. Additional work above and beyond waiting list initiatives is being commissioned from these centres and many pathology services are establishing service level agreements with the independent sector. However, pathology services should take account of additional work likely to be commissioned by Primary Care Trusts of which secondary care NHS Trusts may not be sufficiently aware.
  10. Some Independent Sector Treatment Centres have their own pathology services. We are assured that all services will be accredited, but not necessarily by CPA(UK)Ltd. For example, the South African Accreditation agency (SANAS) is the accreditation body in South Africa and accredits laboratories to International ISO/IEC 17025 and 15189 standards. The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) has a mutual recognition agreement with them and so have most countries in Europe, Australia, Asia and New Zealand.
  11. The possibility of independent sector provision of NHS pathology services is in the next phase of Department of Health activity. All Strategic Health Authorities have recently been tasked with defining their present pathology capacity, the expected demands on the service for the local delivery plans of 2005–2008, and identifying the gap. Pathology

services should be closely involved with the lead person in each Strategic Health Authority with responsibility for diagnostics in order to engage urgently in this process. Initial estimates of deficiencies in the workforce, equipment, buildings, etc. have been submitted to the Department of Health. The independent sector will be invited to tender for this work while more detailed information from NHS pathology services is needed by September along with proposed solutions for bridging the capacity gap within the NHS or with collaboration from the independent sector. However, we are assured that it is likely that the majority of the investment in pathology services will be through the NHS not the independent sector. NHS solutions will have to be in the spirit of 'modernising' and bids for money from this source will be assessed in this context.

12. The Royal College of Pathologists has established a Pathology Modernisation Reference Panel. The Panel, chaired by the President, comprises Dr Helen Williams, Dr Danielle Freedman, Professor Richard Tedder, Dr Lis Logan, Dr Hani Zakhour (Director of Training and Educational Standards) and Dr Peter Cowling (Director of Professional Standards). The Panel will be a source of help and advice to colleagues encountering problems – particularly relating to training, standards and patient welfare – during pathology service reconfiguration.
13. These developments provide opportunities to constructively influence the reconfiguration of pathology services nationally and locally, primarily to benefit current and future patients. The College is committed to maintaining high standards of professional training and performance to achieve the best possible outcome for patients. Those working in pathology services should be fully involved in making decisions about service reconfiguration and service provision and should take active steps to ensure this.

**Dr Elisabeth Logan**

**Member, Council of The Royal College of Pathologists**

**College representative on New Providers Interface Group (Department of Health)**

**Professor James Underwood**

**President, The Royal College of Pathologists**

**11 August 2004**

## **Annex A      National Pathology Modernisation Group (Department of Health)**

Dr Ian Barnes (Chair)	National Pathology Adviser, Department of Health
Mr David Astley	Chief Executive, East Kent Hospitals NHS Trust
Dr Graham Beastall	Consultant clinical scientist, North Glasgow University Hospitals NHS Trust
Dr Clair du Boulay	Consultant histopathologist, Southampton University Hospitals NHS Trust
Mr Tony Bruce	Chief Executive, Staffordshire Moorlands Primary Care Trust
Ms Christine Hannah	Chief Executive, Cheshire & Merseyside Strategic Health Authority
Dr Lucy Moore	Director of Workforce Strategy, North East London Strategic Health Authority
Professor Adrian Newland	Consultant haematologist, Barts & The London NHS Trust
Ms Sharon Palser	Acting Director of Modernisation, Staffordshire and Shropshire Strategic Health Authority
Dr Gina Radford	Regional Director of Public Health, East of England
Professor James Underwood	Consultant histopathologist, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust and President, The Royal College of Pathologists
Mr Peter Wisher	General Manager, PathLinks
Dr Dennis Wright	Consultant clinical scientist, North West London Hospitals NHS Trust
Dr Elizabeth Wright	Consultant microbiologist, West Suffolk Hospitals NHS Trust
Mitzi Blennerhassett	Lay representative