NHS Confederation support for clinical commissioning groups

Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) sit at the heart of the Government’s reform programme for the NHS. We know CCG leaders face major challenges as they work toward authorisation at the same time as grappling with the unprecedented financial pressures and structural changes confronting the NHS. But we believe they have a real opportunity right now to shape a new system that delivers better quality and outcomes for their patients and communities.

Helping clinical commissioners to achieve this is a top priority for the NHS Confederation. We provide a wide range of resources that will help CCGs to develop their local commissioning plans and structures, and to influence national health policy. Pathfinder CCGs can access these services by registering at www.nhsconfed.org/ccg

This leaflet provides some more information about our work and how you can get involved.

The role of the NHS Confederation

The NHS Confederation is the national voice of the health service and its leaders. We represent all types of organisations that commission and provide NHS services. We are the only body with the breadth and experience to bring together the full range of organisations that make up the modern NHS, and there has never been a more important time to have this collective voice.

We run workshops, seminars and conferences on national and international health policy issues. The NHS Confederation annual conference and exhibition attracts two thousand delegates, speakers and exhibitors each year.

We help members access and apply the latest health services research, and provide bespoke advice on specific policy leadership, governance, management and communications issues.

Supporting clinical commissioning: our messages to Government

We believe that giving primary care clinicians more control over local health services and more responsibility for NHS resources is the right thing to do. But to make this work the Government needs to create the right conditions for success.

Our key messages to policy-makers are that:

We need CCGs to thrive. The success of CCGs will be critical to the success of the new NHS. They must be supported and empowered.

www.nhsconfed.org/ccg
CCGs must have freedom to act. There is a plethora of bodies emerging that will surround CCGs. Their role must be to advise and enable clinical commissioners, not veto their decisions.

CCGs must have sufficient resources. It will be impossible for CCGs to succeed if their running costs are fixed too low.

CCGs will face the biggest financial challenge in NHS history. Where tough, clinically defensible decisions are needed, they must have political, managerial and professional support. Clinical commissioners will have to take some unpopular decisions, including decisions about decommissioning services. This will be impossible if the public does not understand the need for change.

CCG development needs will vary – they must be able to control the nature of the support they receive. There is a danger that imposed CCG development will waste scarce resources and fail.

There must be a balanced, proportionate and targeted performance regime. CCGs cannot solve the toughest challenges the NHS has known overnight and clinicians will walk away from leadership responsibility if they feel unsupported. The goals set for CCGs must be relevant, achievable and sensitive to local circumstances.

Our services for clinical commissioning groups

Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) need strong representation, influence, and access to the services, resources and networks that will enable them to succeed. This is where we can help.

Our services for CCGs are based on our research with the CCG pathfinders to find out what they want and need. We understand the challenges you face in light of ongoing policy uncertainty, the need for more clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and the pressures on your time, funding and staffing.

In addition to the services available to all NHS Confederation members, we have a range of activities planned for 2011/12 and 2012/13 specifically designed to support CCG leaders during the transition period, and as they prepare for authorisation. These include:

- advocacy work to influence the design of the new commissioning system, including the commissioning outcomes framework and proposed quality premium, CCG authorisation and running costs, and the role of clinical networks and senates
- new reports and discussion papers on topics such as working with commissioning support service providers, managing service re-configuration and the role of CCGs in supporting primary care improvement
- networking events for CCG managers, seminars on the role of CCGs in public health commissioning, and workshops on using health services research to inform commissioning plans.

We are working closely with colleagues in other national primary care organisations and professional bodies, including the National Association of Primary Care, NHS Alliance, Family Doctor Association and Royal College of GPs, to design and deliver this work, and to create an effective range of services to support CCGs in future.

How to get involved

CCGs can currently access these core NHS Confederation resources at no extra cost as part of our PCT cluster membership package.

To benefit from our products and services for commissioners, you just need to register your CCG via our website: www.nhsconfed.org/ccg

We will be undertaking further research with CCG leaders to find out more about what services they will need in future and a short online survey will be distributed to all CCGs in November 2011. We welcome your suggestions on what type of resources are most important to you, so please take the time to give us your feedback.

For more information or to register with us, please contact our commissioning team by emailing ccg@nhsconfed.org