Monitor
Independent Regulator
of NHS Foundation Trusts

16 August 2012

By email to all foundation trust chief executives

Dear colleague

I am writing to draw your attention to an important report published today by the National Quality Board, which Monitor is a member of, which sets out a collective view from the leaders of the national system on how quality will operate in the new architecture. Sir David Nicholson has written to your Chair, in his capacity as Chair of the NQB, about this report.

We are all united in the common purpose of ensuring that patients receive the highest quality care possible. However, with the system changing, I recognise that there may be a lack of clarity as to where responsibilities for quality will lie in the new architecture from April 2013.

I therefore urge you to read, understand and hold a board-level discussion about this report from the National Quality Board, which provides that clarity by describing:

- the nature and place of quality in the new health system;
- the distinct roles and responsibilities for quality of the different parts of the system;
- how the different parts of the system should work together to share information and intelligence on quality and to ensure an aligned and coordinated system wide response in the event of a quality failure; and
- the values and behaviours that all parts of the system will need to display in order to put the interests of patients and the public first and always ahead of organisational interests.

The report is being published in draft form, and will be updated as necessary in order to take into account any relevant conclusions, findings and recommendations from the forthcoming Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Public Inquiry.

The main messages in the report are as follows:

- Quality is systemic. It is not the responsibility of any one part of the system. Rather, it is a collective endeavour, requiring collective effort and collaboration at every level of the system.

- There must be clarity and understanding as to the distinct roles and responsibilities in relation to quality across the system.

- The first line of defence is frontline professionals, both clinical and managerial, who deal directly with patients and carers and are responsible for their own

professional conduct and competence and for the quality of the care that they provide.

- The second line of defence is the boards and senior leaders of health and care providers responsible for ensuring the quality of care delivered by their organisations. They are ultimately accountable when things go wrong.

- Commissioners are responsible for the quality of care that they commission and regulators should perform their statutory functions with the best interests of patients at heart.

- However, the distinct roles and responsibilities of different parts of the system mean that it is essential that there are robust processes in place to ensure that information and intelligence about quality is proactively shared.

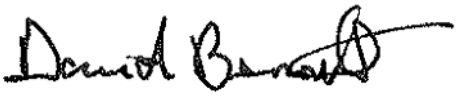
- To strengthen this, the NQB's report sets out a new network of local and regional Quality Surveillance Groups (QSGs). QSGs will bring together commissioners, regulators and other parts of the system to share information and intelligence on quality in order to spot the early signs of problems and to take corrective and supportive action to prevent early problems becoming more serious quality failures. They will be supported and facilitated by the NHS Commissioning Board and will be operational in each local area and region by 1 April 2013.

- The report also ensures that there is a clear process in place for reactively responding to potential or actual serious quality failures, which builds on the existing Risk Summit model.

The NQB's report can be found here: http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/08/quality-new/

If you have any views on this report that you wish to feed in to the NQB before they finalise their report, please do so by emailing nationalqualityboard@dh.gsi.gov.uk and copying it to us at toby.lambert@monitor-nhsft.gov.uk by **30 September 2012**.

Yours sincerely



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