



ASSOCIATION · OF  

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COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCILS

FOR · ENGLAND · & · WALES

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NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE AND COMMUNITY CARE BILL

HOUSE OF LORDS REPORT STAGE

Amendment in name of Lord Kilmarnock and Lord Young of Dartington

Amendment 120

To insert a new Clause: "Clinical and General Standards Board"

The Government has introduced an amendment to the Bill which would have the effect of creating a Clinical Standards Advisory Group which would provide advice to the Secretary of State for Health on clinical standards following the introduction of the NHS reforms. This Group would be made up of representatives of the Royal Colleges.

The Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales has welcomed the Government's decision to establish such a body. However, it is concerned that the Government's proposals would appear to omit any formal representation for the users of services. Clinical standards are, of course, of crucial importance for patients. They should not be considered as solely the prerogative of professional interests.

However, the amendment in the name of Lord Kilmarnock and Lord Young addresses these concerns. The proposed Clinical and General Standards Board would be required to include people nominated by consumer organisations. In addition, its remit would be extended specifically to cover the quality of health services and it would have a responsibility to set standards



rather than merely comment on them. The amendment also enables the proposed Board to have a pro-active role in initiating and carrying out its own enquiries and in disseminating good practice.

This Association, like many other organisations, has expressed concern that the overall effect of the Bill will be to promote cost containment at the expense of high quality services. The argument runs like this. Hospital or service managers (the 'providers') will want to win contracts and to do this they will have to cut costs. This may well mean that quality standards will decline. Similarly, those purchasing services (the 'acquirers' - usually DHAs or fund-holding practices) will be operating with a fixed budget and will be seeing the most economical contracts.

The amendment in the names of Lord Kilmarnock and Lord Young would provide an extremely important safeguard to protect the quality of services to patients.

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This briefing is prepared by the Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales (ACHCEW). ACHCEW was set up in 1977 to represent the consumer of health services at national level and to provide a forum for member CHCs. 196 CHCs out of the 215 CHCs in England and Wales are members of the Association. ACHCEW is mainly funded by subscriptions from individual CHCs, but also receives grants from the Department of Health and a number of other bodies.

