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Report slams new patient empowerment proposals

'Watchdog or Lapdog?', a new report launched today by the Association of Community Health Councils (ACHCEW), identifies a range of serious flaws in the government's new proposals on patient empowerment, which involve abolishing Community Health Councils (CHCs) and establishing instead a range of new bodies. According to the report:

- The new bodies lack independence.
- The system as a whole is fragmented meaning that the new structures will be more expensive and more cumbersome but less effective.
- The new bodies lack statutory powers. The report warns that the powers currently enjoyed by Community Health Councils (CHCs) are likely to disappear, meaning that the new bodies will be little more than 'focus groups'.

Donna Covey, Director of ACHCEW commented:

'This report is extremely timely. The National Plan proposals are at a crucial stage. People need to be made aware that they are in danger of losing an effective, independent Watchdog, the Community Health Council, and receiving in its place a cumbersome system that lacks independence.

'Patient confidence in the NHS has been severely damaged over the past year by a series of medical scandals, including the Ledward case, the Shipman case and events at Alder Hey hospital. These measures will do nothing to restore patient confidence.

'There is a widespread consensus in the health community that patients need an effective independent Watchdog. Far from delivering that, the National Plan proposals are likely to make the NHS less accountable than ever.'

Copies of the report are available free from the Association of Community Health Councils. Please send an A4 stamped addressed envelope to:

[Watchdog or Lapdog](#)

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