



ASSOCIATION · OF

COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCILS

FOR · ENGLAND · & · WALES

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PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING

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NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE AND COMMUNITY CARE BILL

Schedule 2, page 56, line 45, at end insert:-

"(2) At least three months before the commencement of each financial year an NHS trust shall prepare a document setting out its plans for development covering the three years commencing with the first day of the next financial year and any proposal for variation in the methods, location or resources employed in carrying out its functions for the time being conferred on it by an order under Section 5(1) of this Act.

(3) An NHS Trust shall circulate a document produced under paragraph 8(2) above to all relevant Community Health Councils and such other persons as seem to the trust to have an interest in the matter or to be representative of the interests of patients using services provided by the trust and shall take account of any views or representations received on the document.

(4) For the purposes of paragraph 8(3) above, a relevant Community Health Council is a Community Health Council which carries out its function in respect of patients using services provided by the trust."

Paragraph 8 of Schedule 2 requires that NHS Trusts shall provide reports to the Secretary of State on such matters as their forward plans. This amendment would require that Trusts should publish their plans on an annual basis and that this plan should be the basis of consultation with relevant CHCs and other organisations with an interest.

There is concern that NHS Trusts will play virtually no part in the NHS planning system and that they will make decisions on their operational arrangements purely on the basis of commercial considerations without regard for the impact on the rest of the health service locally. This amendment would require that proper planning documents will be produced and published, and will also be the subject of a consultation process. The amendment envisages that the documents will deal with any proposals to vary the way in which services are provided. This mirrors the obligation on District Health Authorities to consult before making substantial variations in the provision of service or the use of buildings.

The amendment will require NHS Trusts to listen to the views of those representing patients and those who use the services they provide. CHCs, as the statutory representative of the patients, together with voluntary organisations such as Age Concern, MENCAP etc, will have the opportunity of commenting on the plans of NHS Trusts. This will be beneficial in making the services provided more sensitive to the needs and wishes of those who use them. It also provides a lay input into the decisions of NHS Trusts, which may otherwise be dominated by professional concerns.

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. 194 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.