



Rt Hon Andrew Lansley MP
Secretary of State for Health

18th June 2010

Dear Secretary of State,

NATIONAL QUALITY BOARD: QUALITY INFORMATION STRATEGY

As chair of the National Quality Board, I enclose the final report of the Board's strategy regarding information on the quality of services. I hope it will prove a key input to the work you are leading on information, as well as on wider reforms to the NHS.

The strategy provides recommendations to improve how information is created, used and communicated, and advice on how the system itself should be structured. It was developed by a sub-group of the National Quality Board made up of NQB members (Sally Brearley and Tim Kelsey), the statutory organisations represented on the NQB and other partners (CQC, Monitor, NPSA, NICE, DH and the NHS Information Centre) and external experts (John Carvel, Robert Winter and Andrew Vallance-Owen). The sub-group itself was chaired by expert NQB member and immediate past president of the Royal College of GPs, Professor David Haslam.

Both the sub-group and the Board agreed that information on the quality of services needs to be:

- **Available.** Covering the right areas and being accessible to all.
- **Trusted.** Inspiring confidence and drawn from high quality data.
- **Insightful.** Answering the questions users want to ask.

The strategy's interim report showed that we face significant challenges in this becoming the norm rather than the exception. Findings included that 40% of health programme budgeting areas, representing £20billion of annual expenditure, are without any nationally collected quality information.

As such, the strategy argues that the public needs to be placed at the centre of a simpler, more open, and more trustworthy system of quality information.

Key recommendations include:

- The system supporting information should be transformed to one founded on local responsibility, with local organisations being required to cleanse and publish their own data.
- To start to move towards this, all data collections should be brought together in a single body whose role should be to publish this data online as efficiently and quickly as possible.
- The state must proactively help create a market for the analysis and presentation of information. Whilst the state should ensure a market is working, it must recognise it is not a monopoly provider, and should not crowd out what the market could provide.
- All data should be accessible through www.data.gov.uk, with a programme of work to make this happen – for example by speeding up existing processes around extracting data from primary care.

- All NHS-funded organisations and providers should be contractually obliged to provide data to a standard quality and in an interoperable format that will allow data-matching with records in other care contexts.
- There should be a Code of Practice for those presenting quality information, including full disclosure of methods, definitions, and data sources.

The full set of 28 recommendations are included within the strategy's final report. The sub-group would be happy to meet with you to talk through these recommendations in further detail.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Nicholson', written over a thin red horizontal line.

DAVID NICHOLSON

CHAIR, NATIONAL QUALITY BOARD