

30 June 2009

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Dear Colleague

This time last year, following the efforts of 2,000 frontline clinicians and the 60,000 people engaged in producing the NHS Next Stage Review, I published my report: *High Quality Care for All*. At its heart was one simple yet radical idea: to put quality at the heart of the NHS. A year on it is right to reflect on where we are.

Across each dimension of quality - patient experience, patient safety and clinical effectiveness there has been real progress and patients are already seeing the difference.

There are many examples to choose from. To name but a few: we now have 50 new GP led Health Centres, 9.3 million patients with long term conditions have a personal care plan, more people than ever before are quitting smoking and are able to benefit from keyhole surgery. The focus on quality has moved up the agenda for staff and organisations, supported by the promotion of innovation through the introduction of tools and programmes such as NHS Evidence, the Innovation Fund and the Challenge Prizes.

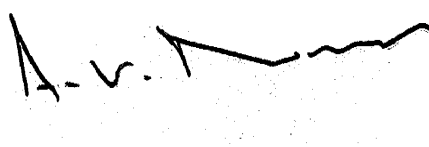
Yet there is more to do. In order to drive the quality agenda further and free up clinicians time to do this my report includes proposals on

- **Refining of targets based on evidence** – We want to free up front line staff so they can focus on delivering high quality care. We will remove the obsolete 13 week outpatient and 26 week inpatient performance targets, as well as reviewing data collections across the board in order to reduce the burden on front line staff;
- **Clinician budget ownership** - We will look at giving clinical teams in the acute sector ownership of their budget. Allowing clinical teams to manage their budgets will promote entrepreneurship and innovative delivery of services built around the needs of the patient;
- **Peer review accreditation system** - We will create a new voluntary peer review system in which clinicians will judge the standard of their peers in order to drive up quality and achieve a 'gold standard' of care. The system will be developed through close collaboration and consultation with the relevant partners and stakeholders.

The economic challenge now facing the country makes this quest for quality an absolute necessity. High quality care is not an unaffordable luxury but the centrepiece of an efficient health service. Indeed, in healthcare, quality and efficiency are two sides of the same coin. As a surgeon treating NHS patients each week, I know from my own experience that this is the case.

I hope you will find my report *High Quality Care for All: Our Journey So Far* informative and inspiring.

Implementation is not always easy and I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in delivering high quality care for patients.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Darzi', with a stylized, wavy line extending from the end.

Ara Darzi