



**Centre for Workforce Intelligence Discussion Document: *Shape of the Medical Workforce:*
starting the debate about the future consultant workforce
Response from the Royal College of Surgeons of England**

Introduction

The Royal College of Surgeons welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the CfWI discussion document on the shape of the medical workforce. The forward looking nature of the consultation document is recognised and the need to start a debate about the future workforce given the significant service delivery and financial challenges that lie ahead is appreciated. The College does, however, have serious concerns about the scenarios that have been put forward and we outline our concerns below.

RCS Concerns

The consultation document recognises that “more evidence from service commissioners and providers on service demand would enable the system to make decisions about further specialty specific changes”. However, its premise is that the system should “reduce supply in a range of hospital-based specialties” because the current growth in general practice is not expected to meet the predicted demand. The contradictory nature of these two statements is at the heart of the concerns the College has about the proposed scenarios.

Issues of education, training, workforce and service delivery are intricately linked. There cannot be decisions taken on one element without a thorough understanding of the others. The scenarios presented appear to be proposing exactly this. There is no doubt that planning a workforce to deliver NHS services is a complex task. This is likely to be further complicated as the NHS reforms bed down and the service is delivered by a range of NHS and non-NHS providers in a variety of locations.

Scenario Testing

The College strongly believes in the need to provide an appropriately trained workforce to deliver safe, high quality services within acceptable timeframes, as set by government. Every specialty (and indeed sub-specialty) will face differing challenges in achieving this, be they demographic, disease-based, or related to workforce issues.

The College does not consider that any of the scenarios are in themselves acceptable, but some may form the starting point for discussion and evolution of a way forward in some surgical specialties. The College would urge the CfWI to engage at specialty level in order to obtain a sufficient granularity in its approach and to understand the effects that a broad-brush method to workforce planning might have on patients requiring treatment in specialty and sub-specialty areas. We are working with our specialty and trainee associations to form a view on the future shape of the workforce and will have emerging views to feed in to the CfWI work as it develops. We are keen to remain critically engaged in this important agenda so as to find acceptable solutions.