

19th February 2009

The Greater Manchester Pathology (Laboratory Medicine) Network

**Response to consultation on:
 The Future of the Healthcare Science Workforce
 Modernising Scientific Careers: The Next Steps**

Over half of the total healthcare science workforce in the NHS are employed in pathology services. The Greater Manchester Pathology (Laboratory Medicine) Network's Priority Action Group 4 - Workforce met on 11th February 2009 to discuss the proposals laid out in *The Future of the Healthcare Science Workforce. Modernising Scientific Careers: The Next Steps. A Consultation* and to formulate a Network response, answering the questions posed on the Chief Scientific Officer's website.

These questions and the Network's responses are detailed below:

1) Are there any other challenges that have not been outlined that the Healthcare Science (HCS) workforce face?

- Does not address demographics of the profession (many people will retire in next 5 years).
- Does not address the speed of change which affects the profession and the wider context e.g. NHS Targets/DH initiatives (A&E, 18 weeks, MRSA screening, CATS, CVD risk screening) and the recommendations for service reconfiguration outlined in the Independent Review of Pathology Services in England (Carter Report).
- Does not address the staffing problems of providing a 24/7 service.
- The proposals do not consider the needs of a changing workforce that may have several careers during their working life and do not lend themselves to such needs.

The Healthcare Science Workforce: The Case for Changing Training and Careers

2) Please rank the issues in terms of how pressing they are for you, where 1 = Important, 2 = Neutral and 3 = Least Important:

Workforce planning	1 2 3
Education and Training	1 2 3
Transparent Career Pathway	1 2 3

The group felt that the proposals will only work if there is excellent workforce planning in place but could not see how MSC would improve workforce planning. Another important area is recruitment and retention.

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3) Are there specific problems in Workforce Planning which need to be addressed?

- Aging workforce - needs a programme now!
- Current lack of transparency in workforce planning arrangements and the need to involve services in workforce planning activity
- The unpredictability of policies on Pathology (e.g., ICATS) making workforce planning difficult.
- Currently BMS degrees are not commissioned
- Need for more coordination of workforce planning on a regional and national basis
- Lack of robust workforce data for many professions

The Vision for Healthcare Science

4) Are there any other potential benefits that have not been outlined that can be achieved by modernising the Healthcare Science (HCS) workforce?

- Increasing the visibility of HCS.

The Modernising Scientific Careers Programme

5) Are there any additional overarching principles you would add, in modernising the Healthcare Science (HCS) workforce?

- Should be linked to local service needs and development.
- Needs to be able to respond quickly to change.

The Proposed Training and Career Pathways

6) How can we make careers in Healthcare Science under Modernising Scientific Careers as attractive as possible for:

Healthcare Science Assistants (HCSA)?

Healthcare Scientist Practitioners (HCSP)?

Healthcare Scientists (HCS)?

- Training must be realistic, relevant, transparent and fair across professions and geography. Multidisciplinary will be attractive to some and not to others.
- It is important to value everyone in the team and organisation. Staff should not be given unrealistic hopes about career progression.

7) Do these proposals enable sufficient flexibility for the workforce to meet the anticipated changes in:

Delivering high quality patient Care Yes **No** (already deliver it!)

Technology and scientific advances in the disciplines Yes **No** (staff already have specialist knowledge)

New models of care **Yes** No (wider training to undertake new roles)

Skills mix arrangements **Yes** No (this is the point of MSC!)

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8) Do you agree with the proposal for Healthcare Science Assistants (HCSA) to have the opportunity to gain formal awards and qualifications? **Yes** No

9) To support the Practitioner Training Programme (PTP), should there be greater provision of Higher Education/ Further Education academic programmes with NHS funded workforce placements aligned to the outcomes of the Practitioner Training Programme? **Yes** No
(Need NHS funded placements for BMS)

10) How can Further Education contribute to the learning and development of Healthcare Science Assistant (HCSA) and Healthcare Scientist Practitioner (HCSP)?

- Provides underpinning knowledge to perform the role.
- Nationally recognised qualifications.

11) In the Practitioner Training Programme (PTP) should trainees undertake workplace based training in one discipline (focussed PTP e.g. only in biochemistry) or in related disciplines (broad-based PTP, e.g. in biochemistry and haematology)?

Life Sciences	Focused PTP	Broad-based PTP
Physiological Sciences	Focused PTP	Broad-based PTP
Physical Sciences and Engineering	Focused PTP	Broad-based PTP

- It all depends upon a particular department's needs and the job. Histology may be more focussed and Biochemistry/Haematology more broad-based.
- Broad based training at this level may be a good preparation for the proposed STP rotational training, but concerns remain that the appropriate depth of knowledge may be sacrificed to achieve this

12) Do you agree with the broad indicative themes laid out for the Scientist Training Programme (STP)? **Yes** **No**

- Staff need more in-depth knowledge at this level. It will depend upon the particular job.
- Need for clarity in how the recruitment for the STP programme is to be undertaken.

13) Do you agree with the proposals for Higher Specialist Healthcare Scientist Training (HSST) programmes? **Yes** **No**

- It must meet FRCPATH standard.

14) Are there existing programmes that could be used for Accredited Specialist Expertise? **Yes** No

- IBMS courses and qualifications.
- It is important not to destabilise existing courses e.g. MSc Clinical Biochemistry

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Implementation Issues

15) How important are the following areas for the development of the existing workforce, where 1 = Vitally Important, 2 = Important, 3 = Not Very Important and 4 = Least Important:

Leadership skills	1	2	3	4
Management skills	1	2	3	4
Further Specialist Scientist Expertise	1	2	3	4
Higher Specialist Healthcare Scientist Training (HSST)	1	2	3	4
Other (please specify) - ASE already in place, in the main.				

Further comments

- It was generally felt that Pathology would not look much different after the introduction of MSC.
- A national funding scheme for education and training would be strongly welcomed.
- Concerns about the extra burden of providing in-service training which would require a lot of extra resources.
- The group was unsure about the value of regulating all professions. It is not clear to which grouping it is proposed to allocate the existing regulated Healthcare Science professions (Biomedical Scientists and Clinical Scientists) or whether new professions would need to be created alongside these.
- There needs to be a clear and practical timetable for reforms to education and training

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