

The announcement from NHS Improvement (NHSI) that there are to be 29 potential pathology networks formed across NHS England is now the final mandate for the implementation of the Carter model of pathology service delivery. This concept is not new and many of us have lived with it in a partial form for the past ten years or more. Now it is to be a reality for all.

Although it is not unexpected, what concerns me the most are the eagerly anticipated savings that are projected to be made. This is not to say that I do not support measures to save money, far from it - I abhor the wastage of our taxes on inefficient or wasteful public services. However, it is with more than a degree of trepidation that I await the emerging plans. With an ageing workforce now is not the time to regard training as a financial drain rather than an investment in the future. Likewise with our quality systems; continued ISO accreditation does not come without a significant element of financial commitment in respect of both staff and equipment. Both are essential for the delivery of the shared goal of high quality patient care.

I cannot wholly blame NHSI as I know that all government departments are still being required to cut deeply and swiftly and health is no exception. I do struggle though with any inference that the professional bodies are one hundred per cent behind the initiative. I think it may

EMERGING PLANS



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be more accurate to describe us as reluctant passengers. We climbed on board - the National pathology Optimisation Delivery Board, in fact - through our representation on the Pathology Alliance. However, irrespective of personal and professional view, this change was always going to happen. We are now left with the task of making this work to the best of our abilities. I expect this will not be a welcome statement but it is a non-negotiable fact. So where do we go from here?

The Institute is committed to supporting its members through what may well be a difficult time for some. Service consolidation is never totally painless and it will inevitably mean

changes in the nature and location of some services. The consequence is that some may be required to take on new skills and responsibilities in order to deliver these reconfigured services. We will offer our guidance to networks needing to retrain staff to undertake new roles or responsibilities. We are the one organisation that is equipped to directly help to transform a workforce and we will not compromise on our commitment to uphold our standards.

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