

Chief executive's statement



I would like to start by thanking our members and staff for the incredibly warm welcome which I have received during my first month as chief executive of the NHS Confederation. It has inspired me with real confidence to see the exceptional level of knowledge,

commitment and professionalism present at all levels across the organisation. I would also like to express particular thanks to Sir Keith and Nigel Edwards for the way in which they have led the organisation and steered its course during an extremely challenging time for members and the industry as a whole.

Those of you who know me already will know I am not exaggerating when I say I believe the NHS is one of the world's greatest institutions and inventions. I feel extremely privileged to be heading up the body that brings together and speaks on behalf of those who lead our health service. So much of what is needed right now is the view of the whole industry, and the NHS Confederation has a key role to play in helping determine how all the different parts of the NHS will add up to an effective whole in future. There has never been a more important time for this organisation to punch its weight on behalf of its members.

While others continue to focus on the political and ideological drivers behind the NHS reforms, we know it is our members who will ultimately have to deliver these changes and make them work in practice. Throughout the reform process, the NHS Confederation has stressed that policy-makers should avoid making policy without listening to the people who will be responsible for implementing it. We have also made clear that the reform timetable should be driven by the realities of what is achievable in each area. I have already met with a number of key stakeholders, including David Cameron's new health adviser, Paul Bate, Nick Clegg and the Liberal Democrat health team, and have continued to put across these messages.

In an interview with the *Guardian* in May, I expressed the NHS Confederation's support for some key aspects of the reforms, including the introduction of clinical commissioning, the empowerment of local government to improve health and well-being, and the focus on outcomes. But I stressed that the proposed changes are not sufficiently focused on the real problems facing the NHS, such as the financial squeeze and the need to better integrate services for patients. It is vital that the leadership community continues to actively engage in the political process to ensure that policy-makers remain aligned to the fundamental issues that will improve care for patients and value for taxpayers.

At our recent member event with the Government's NHS Future Forum, I was overwhelmed by the extent to which NHS managers and leaders are committed to helping deliver reform in the NHS despite the uncertainty that the reforms represent to their personal futures. The NHS Confederation is wholly committed to supporting members in their efforts to shape the reform programme and will continue to provide the crucial channel through which NHS leaders can participate and feed into the reform process. I am personally committed to making sure the NHS Confederation continues to effectively represent the views of all of its members at each stage of the process, to help ensure the reforms result in the best possible outcome for the NHS, those who work within it and the public that it serves.

The past year has been one of the most difficult and uncertain periods in the history of the NHS. But we know that the coming year is going to be just as challenging. So, looking ahead to the next 12 months, what can you expect from the NHS Confederation?

As Sir Keith has already mentioned, our core purpose – influencing healthcare policy, bringing people together to tackle issues of shared concern, and helping our members make sense of the whole health and social care system – hasn't changed. But we are committed to carrying out each of these functions more efficiently and effectively on behalf of our members. The organisation has made significant progress in recent months, both externally – forging closer links with its membership, building a stronger

public profile and strengthening relations with key stakeholders – and internally – improving the way in which it develops and delivers services for members. I am committed to continuing this work to ensure that the NHS Confederation is fully responsive and accountable to its members. We will work more openly and transparently so that members can see tangible results and be confident that we are providing real value to them and the NHS as a whole.

In response to feedback from our members, we have already set out our priorities for the coming year: tackling issues related to finance and quality; helping members address the challenges of health reform and transition; looking at the new commissioning landscape; and working across public health and social care. We want members to sit at the centre of each of these work programmes to ensure we are providing the services and support that members really want and need.

We will continue to regularly consult with our members – via a range of channels, including member working groups, polls and surveys – to gain members' views on key policy issues as well as the content and direction of our work programmes. It is incredibly important that we have close working links with our members so that we can effectively represent them and use their feedback to underpin and strengthen our influencing and external relations work.

Over the next 12 months we will be developing our member offer for new and emerging NHS bodies, such as commissioning consortia, social enterprises and community service providers. We will also be looking to develop stronger links with the clinical community, NHS supply chain organisations and, most importantly, patients, so we can continue to effectively represent and work in partnership with all those who contribute to our modern healthcare system.

There is a lot that we need to do. But I am confident that the NHS Confederation, with the input and support of its members, will meet the challenges that lie ahead.

For those of you attending our annual conference and exhibition in July, I will be making time to personally meet with members to listen to their concerns and discuss how the NHS Confederation can best support them. I'll be on the NHS Confederation stand at various points over the three days if you would like to come and speak to me.

I would like to thank you all for your continued support and look forward to leading the NHS Confederation on your behalf and working with you in the future.

Mike Farrar

Chief executive, NHS Confederation