


Monitor

Making the health sector
work for patients

About Monitor






The NHS is for many Britain's defining national achievement, guided since 1948 by its founding principles: to provide health services to everyone, free at the point of delivery, based on clinical need and not ability to pay. Upholding these principles takes hard work and imagination, and the NHS is under constant pressure to find new ways to meet changing and growing patient needs within its budget.

Successive governments have responded by changing the way the NHS is organised. One such change was to create NHS foundation trusts. These health service providers – such as hospital, mental health or ambulance trusts - are part of the NHS but they gain extra freedom to manage themselves by demonstrating they are well led as organisations. Monitor was set up to regulate NHS foundation trusts in 2004 although in 2012 the Health and Social Care Act brought in further changes, widening Monitor's remit.

Today Monitor's job as the independent regulator of NHS foundation trusts fits into our broader role as sector regulator for health services in England. The job of a sector regulator is to look after the interests of consumers in their sector, so Monitor's main duty is to protect and promote the interests of NHS patients. This means we must put patient interests first in everything we do.

Monitor's main duty is to protect and promote the interests of NHS patients. This means we must put patient interests first in everything we do.






In particular, Monitor is required to support patient interests by “promoting the provision of healthcare services that is economic, efficient and effective, and maintains or improves their quality”. Put more simply, our job is to help those working on the NHS front line to improve services continuously so the NHS can provide more and better care for patients within the resources available to it.

To do this we have been given responsibilities covering the provision, pricing and procurement of NHS services. We collaborate with the other healthcare bodies that have related responsibilities to make sure what we do is ‘joined up’. We work particularly closely with the Care Quality Commission (CQC), NHS England, the NHS Trust Development Authority (TDA) and Healthwatch, as well as the Department of Health and the Competition and Markets Authority.


As before, Monitor makes sure public providers of NHS care are well led and able to deliver quality care on a sustainable basis. We do this by setting the governance and operational standards, or ‘bar’, that all NHS foundation trusts must meet to be eligible for the NHS provider licence that we now issue. We are working with the TDA to make sure all public providers of NHS care can meet this bar in due course. We also license independent providers of NHS services approved by the CQC.



Our job is to help those working on the NHS front line to improve services continuously so the NHS can provide more and better care for patients within the resources available to it.

We monitor the continuing performance of licensed providers to make sure the required standards are being maintained and if we see signs that an NHS foundation trust may slip below the bar we step in to help the trust avoid more serious problems. If necessary, we take formal steps to make sure problems are fixed. For example, if the CQC finds care inadequate at a foundation trust, we can place the trust in special measures to ensure things are put right.

If difficulties at any licensed provider, whether public or independent, threaten its ability to continue providing essential services, Monitor is responsible for making sure those services are maintained for local patients. As a last resort, we can put a troubled trust into administration, as we did in Mid Staffordshire. In any case, wherever necessary we involve other local healthcare organisations in finding long-term solutions for struggling or failing trusts. Experience shows difficulties at individual trusts are rarely isolated from the local healthcare system.



With NHS England we are also responsible for regulating payments made by commissioners to providers for all NHS services. Monitor sets the rules that govern the prices paid for services, while the grouping of services for payment purposes is done by NHS England. This work is critical to making sure every pound of taxpayers' money spent on health goes as far as it can and results in the best possible care for patients.

As sector regulator, we also make sure patients do not lose out through restrictions on their rights to make choices, through poor purchasing on their behalf, or through inappropriate anti-competitive behaviour by providers or commissioners.

Across all areas of our work we have a duty to enable better integration of services, both within health and between health and social care, where this is in patients' interests. We also seek to encourage innovation and beneficial change by carrying out research and analysis to identify what works and what doesn't, and to stimulate better ways of working.

Monitor wholeheartedly supports the people who commission and manage services, and who care for patients on the NHS front line. We recognise their dedication and the challenges they face.

Taken together, the different parts of our role amount to a substantial responsibility for helping the NHS stay true to its founding principles while living within its means. In exercising this responsibility all of us at Monitor wholeheartedly support the people who commission and manage services, and who care for patients on the NHS front line. We recognise their dedication and the challenges they face every day. Our job is to help them make the NHS work better for patients.



Contact us

Monitor, Wellington House,
133-155 Waterloo Road,
London, SE1 8UG

Telephone: 020 3747 0000
Email: enquiries@monitor.gov.uk
Website: GOV.UK/monitor

This publication can be made available in a number of other formats on request. Application for reproduction of any material in this publication should be made in writing to enquiries@monitor.gov.uk or to the address above.