



Department of  
**Health, Social Services  
and Public Safety**

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AN ROINN  
**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta  
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÁNNYSTRIE O  
**Poustie, Resydènter Heisin  
an Fowk Siccar**

**From: Dr Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer**  
Room C5.18, Castle Buildings  
Upper Newtownards Road  
Belfast, BT4 3SQ

**From: Mr Martin Bradley, Chief Nursing Officer**  
Room C5.14, Castle Buildings  
Upper Newtownards Road  
Belfast, BT4 3SQ

1 December 2009

Dear Colleague,

## **Confidence in Care Programme - Consultation on the role of Responsible Officers : Closing the Gap in Medical Regulation**

The reforms to professional regulation set out in the White Paper *Trust, Assurance and Safety*, are being taken forward in Northern Ireland through the Confidence in Care programme which we jointly lead. Further information on the Confidence in Care programme can be found at:

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/hss/confidence\\_in\\_care.htm](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/hss/confidence_in_care.htm)

Among the many reforms proposed the introduction of responsible officers is one. The introduction of responsible officers for doctors is one of a series of the reforms to the UK system for regulation of health professionals, and is key to the revised regulatory framework underpinning the processes of medical revalidation. The purpose of revalidation when introduced will be to ensure that licensed doctors remain up to date and continue to be fit to practise. Responsible officers will be expected to ensure that any concerns are dealt with fairly and effectively and that where appropriate, individuals are supported to get back on track. Introducing the new processes of revalidation and putting responsible officers in place has major implications for every doctor and for every healthcare organisation. It is the intention that every licensed doctor, regardless of where and how they work, should relate to a responsible officer.

The above consultation document seeks views to inform the introduction of responsible officers in Northern Ireland.

In order to ensure that an opportunity is afforded to all relevant stakeholders to participate in this process we ask that you disseminate the document to colleagues within and external to your organisation who share an interest in this issue. The consultation document can be accessed electronically via the following link:

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/consultations/current\\_consultations.htm](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/consultations/current_consultations.htm)

It has been decided that following a previous UK-wide public consultation in 2008 on the roles and responsibilities of the responsible officer, that this consultation will run for a period of 9 weeks. All consultation responses should be returned, **no later than 5 February 2010**.

**Responses in writing should be sent to:**

Ruth Hutchison  
Programme Support Officer  
Confidence in Care Programme  
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety  
Annex 2  
Castle Buildings  
Belfast  
BT4 3SQ

**Responses via email should be sent to:**

Ruth.Hutchison@dhsspsni.gov.uk

Please indicate whether you are replying as an individual or on behalf of an organisation or group or people. Your response may be made public but if you would prefer it to remain private please make this clear in your reply.

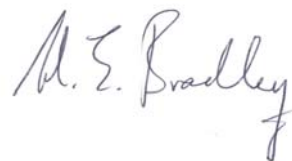
On closure of the formal consultation process, all feedback will be collated and a written summary of responses will be compiled by DHSSPS. The outcome of the consultation and next steps with regard to the implementation of the regulations will be shared with all stakeholders.

The contribution of a wide range of stakeholders to the development of this draft document is appreciated.

Yours faithfully



**Dr Michael McBride**  
Chief Medical Officer



**Martin Bradley**  
Chief Nursing Officer