

29 January-11 February 2010

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# Parliamentnow

## Council

Regulating doctors  
Ensuring good medical practice

## The GMC in Parliament

### MPs continue to debate out-of-hours care

Health Minister Mike O'Brien updated MPs on out-of-hours care in an oral statement to the House of Commons on 9 February 2010. Mr O'Brien said that the Government will work with medical organisations to develop a national database and reiterated that PCTs are responsible for ensuring that GPs they employ speak English and are clinically competent.

During the short debate which followed the statement, Conservative Shadow Health Minister Mark Simmonds MP and Liberal Democrat Shadow Secretary of State for Health Norman Lamb MP supported the GMC's call to be able to language test EEA doctors and for a legal obligation for information sharing between competent authorities in Europe.

The statement followed the recent conclusion of an inquest into the death of **Code A** and the publication of a report into out-of-hours care by Dr **Code A** and Professor **Code A** last week. An earlier written ministerial statement from Mr O'Brien on 4 February 2010 accepted the report's recommendations and announced several improvements to out-of-hours care.

### Norman Lamb MP criticises Panel's decision on Dr Barton

Following the conclusion of the Fitness to Practise hearing of Dr Jane Barton, Liberal Democrat Shadow Health Secretary Norman Lamb MP described the Panel's decision as 'extraordinary' and reiterated his call for a full public inquiry into the events at Gosport Hospital.

### Children, Schools and Families Bill passes Commons Committee Stage

A committee of MPs have completed their detailed consideration of the Children, Schools and Families Bill. The GMC has raised concerns with committee members over Clauses 28 and 29 of the Bill which require organisations or individuals with information relevant to any of the functions of a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to disclose it upon request. It would therefore be compulsory for organisations or individuals such as doctors to provide information on request to LSCBs.

While the GMC supports the compulsory disclosure of information for Serious Case Reviews, we feel that unnecessarily wide powers may undermine patients' trust in doctors. Our concerns are also shared by the BMA. The Bill will now be considered further by MPs at the Report Stage, which is expected to take place on 23 February 2010.

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For further information  
please contact:

# Code A

## News and views

### Parties set out health plans

Both Labour and the Liberal Democrats have outlined further details of their health plans ahead of the General Election campaign.

Gordon Brown set out details of a new national care service which would include one-to-one nursing for cancer patients and extend the care provided to patients in their home. In his [speech](#) at the King's Fund on 8 February 2010, the Prime Minister stressed that any changes must be made 'in dialogue and partnership' with health professionals.

Centre Forum, an independent liberal think-tank, published *The NHS: a liberal blueprint* on 4 February

2010. Written by the Liberal Democrat Shadow Secretary of State, Norman Lamb MP, it argues that liberal reform to the NHS in England should be guided by several key principles including a greater focus on the promotion of health and well-being, giving patients power and responsibility for their healthcare and more freedom and autonomy for NHS staff.

The blueprint also calls for a shift from central bureaucratic control to local accountability and responsibility and proposes the abolition of a number of quangos including the National Patient Safety Agency, which it argues could become part of the Care Quality Commission.

## Standards and ethics issues

### Peers debate assisted dying

Members of the House of Lords debated assisted dying on 3 February 2010. The debate followed a question from former Health Minister Lord Warner asking the government what consideration they have given to an independent inquiry into a change in the law on assisted dying for terminally ill adults.

The majority of peers contributing to the debate favoured an independent inquiry. Lord Bach, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice, acknowledged the strength of feeling relating to both sides of the debate but [stated](#) that an inquiry could be a "time-consuming and potentially very expensive exercise" which might not lead to any progress in the debate on assisted suicide.

### Update on the End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

The Parliamentary Bureau of the Scottish Parliament has proposed that a [special committee](#) should be established to consider Margo MacDonald MSP's End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill. Committee members would be appointed by the leaders of the political parties represented in the Scottish Parliament.

Jim Devine MP (Labour, Livingston) and Paul Flynn MP (Labour, Newport West) have tabled an Early Day Motion supporting the End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill. It has currently received 4 signatures

and will not be debated in the House of Commons before it is dissolved ahead of the General Election.

### Scottish Solicitor General answers question on assisted suicide guidance

In response to a written parliamentary question from Conservative Health Spokesperson Jackson Carlaw MSP on the guidance issued to prosecutors on assisted suicide, Scotland's Solicitor General, Frank Mulholland, [stated](#) on 2 February 2010 that 'the Law Officers do not regard it as appropriate to prepare and publish detailed prosecution policy guidance' in relation to assisted suicide.

### Scottish Government launches new strategy for patient input to care

The Scottish Government launched a new NHS [Quality Strategy](#) on 8 February 2010. This aims to improve the quality of care by utilising patient feedback on areas such as communication, compassion, effective collaboration and clinical excellence.

### Scottish Parliament considers petition on medical records

The Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee has further considered a [petition](#) from a member of the public on patients' rights to amend information held in their medical records. The committee, which has agreed to write to the Scottish Government about the petition, previously approached the GMC for our views regarding the petition, which we provided.

## Regulation and health service reform

### Changes to coroners' system

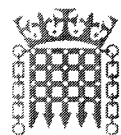
Health Minister Ann Keen MP and Justice Minister Bridget Prentice MP announced details of proposed changes to the coroners' system in England and Wales on 1 February 2010. These include new national service guidelines and the ability for coroner's investigations to be transferred from one area to another to prevent backlogs.

The Ministry of Justice will hold a consultation on the policy details of the new system in March and a Chief Coroner will be appointed in the spring. A National Medical Adviser to the Chief Coroner and a National Medical Examiner are due to be appointed in the autumn.

### Lords approve the establishment of GPhC

Peers approved The Pharmacy Order 2010 which will establish the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC), a new regulatory body for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and registered pharmacy premises in Great Britain.

The Order was passed by the House of Lords on 1 February, having already been approved by the House of Commons on 13 January 2010. It will now be approved by the Privy Council.



**UK Parliament – London**  
www.parliament.uk



**Scottish Parliament – Edinburgh**  
www.scottish.parliament.uk



**Welsh Assembly – Cardiff**  
www.assemblywales.org



**Northern Ireland Assembly – Belfast**  
www.niassembly.gov.uk

## Appointments

### Political appointments in Northern Ireland

Margaret Ritchie MLA, Minister for Social Development, was elected the new Leader of the SDLP at the SDLP Conference on 7 February 2010. She fills the post following the resignation of Mark Durkan MP MLA, who has led the party since 2001.

Thomas Buchanan (DUP, West Tyrone) has been appointed as a member of the Northern Ireland Assembly's Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

## Future events and party conferences

### Recess dates

- Westminster, 10-22 February 2010
- National Assembly for Wales, 15-21 February 2010
- Scottish Parliament, 15-21 February 2010

### The GMC will be attending the following

Conservative Party Spring Conference, 27-28 February 2010

#### Northern Ireland party political conferences

- Sinn Fein, Dublin, 5-7 March 2010

#### Welsh party political conferences

- Plaid Cymru, Cardiff, 19-20 February 2010
- Welsh Labour Party, Swansea, 26-28 February 2010

#### Scottish party political conferences

- Scottish Conservative Party, Perth, 12 February 2010
- Scottish Liberal Democrats, Perth, 5-7 March 2010
- Scottish Labour Party, Glasgow, 27 March 2010

**Source:**

[https://web.archive.org/web/20100414184124/http://www.libdems.org.uk/press\\_releases\\_detail.aspx?title=Full\\_inquiry\\_needed\\_into\\_Dr.\\_Barton\\_case\\_says\\_Lamb\\_&pPK=129aad2a-d893-43c6-af24-e2da88de81de](https://web.archive.org/web/20100414184124/http://www.libdems.org.uk/press_releases_detail.aspx?title=Full_inquiry_needed_into_Dr._Barton_case_says_Lamb_&pPK=129aad2a-d893-43c6-af24-e2da88de81de)

**Full inquiry needed into Dr. Barton case says Lamb***Fri, 29 Jan 2010*

**"This is an utterly extraordinary decision and represents an abject failure of the system to protect patients," said the Liberal Democrat Shadow Health Secretary.**

Commenting on the decision by the GMC Fitness to Practice Panel not to strike Dr Jane Barton off the medical register, Norman Lamb said:

"This is an utterly extraordinary decision and represents an abject failure of the system to protect patients and to give justice to the families who have campaigned for 11 years.

"Given that the GMC itself was pressing for Dr Barton to be struck from the register it raises serious questions about how the rules operate and the decision of this panel.

"Surely it cannot be right given the deaths of many elderly people at Gosport War Memorial Hospital and the findings of failures on the part of Dr Barton that she should be permitted to continue to practice.

"This decision makes it clear that the only way forward is to hold a full public inquiry. At the very least, we owe it to the families of those who died in unexplained circumstances at Gosport Hospital."