

Health Secretary's Five Year Plan for the NHS

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A recent editorial in the BMJ by Professor Chris Ham provides a response to Andy Burnham's five-year plan for the NHS - '**NHS 2010-2015: from good to great. Preventative, people-centred, productive**', which was published before Christmas. Chris suggests that while the document doesn't contain much that is new, it's an important statement of intent leading up to the election.

Chris draws out the following points about the Health Secretary's plan: that the emphasis is on health care staff leading the way with reform and the all-important efficiency savings; that the importance of partnership working between employer, employee and trade unions harks back to the 60s and 70s; that patients have been given many rights but few responsibilities; and that prevention and the care of people with long term conditions has been prioritised and will therefore require better service integration and closer working between agencies.

He suggests, of particular interest, are the proposed levers and incentives to deliver improvements in care, i.e. freezing the prices paid to hospitals and linking hospital payments to patient satisfaction. Chris suggests that in essence, the financial risk is being shifted from commissioners to providers.

As ever, Chris notes, the main question is whether the plan can be delivered.

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