



Hunt lures doctors into management roles with promise of training at Yale

Gareth Iacobucci

The BMJ

The UK government has announced a new fast track programme to encourage doctors into senior management roles in the NHS as part of a package of measures aimed at boosting clinical leadership.

It also plans to double the size of the NHS graduate management training scheme next year from 100 to 200 places (aiming to expand this eventually to 1000 places) and to work with leading British universities to develop a new NHS approved master of business administration (MBA) qualification.

Announcing the plans at the NHS Providers annual conference in Birmingham on 30 November England's health secretary, Jeremy Hunt, said that the NHS would send 30 doctors and nurses to world leading universities as part of the new fast track development programme for clinicians entering management.

Hunt said that the new scheme would support "outstanding clinicians" who are interested in moving into senior management positions in acquiring the requisite knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours. The first cohort will enrol in September 2017 and will be sent to Yale University in Connecticut, USA.

He said that he wanted to increase the numbers of clinicians in NHS chief executive and management roles, as these were much lower than in other countries. He also wanted to increase the number of women and black and minority ethnic leaders in the NHS.

"What is striking when you look at the pool of potential NHS leaders of the future is just how few have a clinical background," Hunt told delegates. "Only 54% of the managers in our hospitals are clinicians—compared to 74% in Canada and the US and 94% in Sweden. At the top, only a third of chief executives are clinicians."

He added, "It is time for urgent action to broaden and deepen the pool of people willing and able to step into NHS management roles. Given that one of the most important roles of a chief executive is to motivate a large number of able, smart, but—let's be honest—often quite headstrong clinicians, we should today ask whether the NHS made a historic mistake in the 1980s by deliberately creating a manager class who were

not clinicians, rather than making more effort to nurture and develop the management skills of those who are."

Hunt said that he had also asked the Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management to examine any existing issues stopping clinicians transferring into management and to look at what can be done to encourage more clinicians into management.

Health Education England will also be asked to examine whether doctors could choose clinical leadership as a specialism in its own right.

Hunt said that these measures reflected the need for the NHS to get better at attracting and retaining the best leaders. He also acknowledged the need to tackle low morale among staff, citing the lessons learnt from the junior doctors' dispute.

To help achieve this, he said that he had asked Health Education England to work with professional bodies and leading trusts to pilot a modern version of the old "firm" structure to help doctors feel valued and improve outcomes for patients.

He said that the pilot schemes, beginning next year, would place renewed emphasis on multidisciplinary learning and longer placements for each trainee, to allow for "more meaningful relationships to improve training and supervision and foster a genuine sense of mentorship."

"At its best, the firm system provided continuity of training, a sense of camaraderie, and a bond between consultants and trainees that has been lost," Hunt said. "Of course, it feels harder to build a strong team when front line pressures are so high—but my argument today is that building that team is the only way to deal with such pressures.

"More clinical leadership, fewer glass ceilings, more career progression, and more flexible working: these are the changes the NHS needs to see over the next decade."

Chris Hopson, chief executive of NHS Providers, said, "We support plans to help more clinicians into senior management roles," adding that piloting new firms "has the potential to help ease workforce pressures."