

Sir Neil McKay
Chair, Joint Committee of Primary Care Trusts
105 Victoria Street
London
SW1E 6QT

17 October 2011

Dear Neil,

Safe and Sustainable: Response to Public Consultation

You will have received under separate cover the panel's responses to the further questions put to us by the Joint Committee of PCTs in August.

During the course of our most recent deliberations the panel members identified a statement, made by a number of respondents during the consultation, to which we would wish to respond by this letter.

The panel members have serious concern about the suggestion made by some respondents that as the panel has advised that all surgical centres currently operating are "safe" the JCPCT's main consideration should be related to matters of access, travel and convenience. There is thus a suggestion that matters of quality and sustainability are irrelevant given that centres have been judged, in the view of some respondents, to have passed the "bar" mark.

The panel members wish to reiterate that they did not assess the centres against any kind of bar. That was not their task. The panel members were asked to assess each centre against its particular ability to meet the *Safe and Sustainable* standards, which are comprehensive in nature and number.

The panel is of the view that its report has identified important differences in the extent to which the centres can meet the quality standards in the future; panel members have reflected these differences in their scores and in the report.

It is our view that the outcome of the panel's work would be rendered redundant were the JCPCT to interpret the report's conclusions as finding that there are no material differences across the centres in their ability to meet the quality standards in the future. This interpretation would not be justified. To repeat, there are important differences. We would remind the JCPCT of the advice that we gave in the introduction to our report, and which we note has been well received by a number of respondents, that "*mediocrity must not be our benchmark for the future*".

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Ian Kennedy

Professor Sir Ian Kennedy
on behalf of panel members