



CRC 8/008

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### **Watchdog sets out rural healthcare needs in response to Government's NHS review**

The Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) is today, Monday 23 June 2008, making public its response to the Government's review of the National Health Service. Dr. Stuart Burgess Chairman of the CRC and the Government's Rural Advocate is returning to Cornwall – the location for an earlier consultation which helped shape the CRC's findings – to introduce the organisation's response.

Dr. Burgess said "I am delighted to be returning to Cornwall today to highlight the dossier of evidence we are submitting to Lord Darzi's review of the NHS. Earlier this year we conducted a series of consultation meetings around the country, including here in Cornwall, to talk to members of the public, patients, and healthcare practitioners about the planning and delivery of healthcare services in rural areas. The main actions identified by participants as the most crucial to delivering equitable healthcare services for rural areas are:

- more locally based health services;
- offering services in the most convenient settings; and
- delivering more accessible and convenient integrated care.

"In our submission we have emphasised the need for flexibility in the design and provision of rural healthcare, rather than the replication of services that work in an urban setting. It has also been made clear to us that access to health services needs to be specifically addressed in the planning, commissioning and delivery of healthcare in rural areas, including travel times, opening hours, availability of public transport and regularity of service including opening hours."

"Our guiding principle is that no one should be disadvantaged by where they live in accessing healthcare services. We welcome, therefore, the pledges recently published by Lord Darzi, emphasising the need for local populations to have a meaningful say over NHS services. This is particularly important in rural areas where a 'one size fits all' approach simply will not work. We now urge the NHS review team to give full consideration to our findings and ensure they are reflected in the planning and delivery of healthcare services in rural areas."

CRC's recommendations for changes that would have a significant impact and ensure the provision of high-quality healthcare in rural areas are:

- a change in the resource allocation formula to give greater recognition to the cost of delivering rural healthcare services and the ageing rural population;
- accessible local services – with an emphasis on co-location of a range of services not just healthcare;
- improved commissioning for rural areas and greater emphasis on joint commissioning of health and social care;

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- an increase in the number and range of outreach and mobile services to address access issues;
- better emergency response measures for life-threatening conditions; and
- a commitment to improved preventative medicine targeted at the hidden deprivation and disadvantage in rural areas.

ENDS

For further information contact Chris Wynne-Davies on 01242 534070

Notes for editors:

1. Details of the government's review of the NHS 'Our NHS, our future' can be found at:

[www.ournhs.nhs.uk](http://www.ournhs.nhs.uk)

2. CRC's rural health dossier 'Our NHS, Our Future: a rural response' can be found at:

[www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/projects/nhsreview](http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/projects/nhsreview)

3. The Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) was established in April 2005 and became an independent body on 1 October 2006, following the enactment of the Natural England and Rural Communities Act, 2006.

The role of the CRC is to provide well-informed, independent advice to government and ensure that policies reflect the real needs and circumstances of people living and working in rural England. We give particular focus to tackling disadvantage and economic under-performance.

We have three key functions:

- advocate: the voice for rural people, business and communities;
- expert advisor: providing evidence-based, objective advice to government and others; and
- independent watchdog: monitoring and reporting on the delivery of policies nationally, regionally and locally.

Further information about the CRC and its work can be found at: [www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk](http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk)