

Standards review further delayed

9 July 2007

The review of the National Minimum Standards and the associated Regulations for care services has again been delayed. Of the three stages of the review outlined when the process was inaugurated in October 2004, only Stage 1 – the change to inspection frequencies brought in during 2006 – which was in any case effectively a separate operation, has been completed.

Virtually no progress has yet been made on Stages 2 and 3, which are concerned respectively with short-term and longer-term changes to the standards themselves, and these tasks, Department of Health (DH) announced on 14 June 2007, “have now been subsumed into the work on the wider reform of health and social care regulation”. This process, involving the much-discussed merger of the Commission for Social Care Inspection and the Healthcare Commission, has also been the subject of several delays and now has a target date for implementation of April 2009.

A parliamentary question to Care Minister Ivan Lewis from Liberal Democrat MP Paul Barstow on 28 June 2007 elicited little further information except a vague reference to “concerns expressed by stakeholders about a two stage approach to changes in the standards”. All that can be gained from this situation is that the review is certainly not being given a high priority within DH and that further hold-ups may well occur.