

Andrew Toner
Project Officer
Competition and Markets Authority

01/04/2015

Dear Mr Toner,

BMA response to the Ashford and Surry hospitals merger inquiry

The British Medical Association (BMA) is an apolitical professional association and independent trade union, representing doctors and medical students from all branches of medicine across the UK and supporting them to deliver the highest standards of patient care. We have a membership of over 153,000, which continues to grow every year.

The BMA does not comment centrally on individual mergers either in relation to clinical matters or, as is the remit of the CMA, the market and potential impact of the merger on patient choice. On the former – clinical matters - we believe that clinicians within the affected trusts are best positioned to provide this kind of input, and we hope that by this stage in the process, the hospitals involved will have adequately consulted with staff accordingly. We expect hospitals that are going through mergers, or indeed any form of reconfiguration, to actively seek the opinions of local doctors and give such opinion great weight within the decision making process.

The BMA has developed a core list of principles for reconfiguration which should be taken into consideration during any merger process:

Reconfiguration **must**:

- First have a thorough impact assessment, including an examination of safety issues
- Include all sectors and patient groups
- Be led by clinicians
- Be based on good clinical evidence that care will be improved or at least not compromised
- Be monitored post-implementation

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Listed as a Trade Union under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974.

Reconfiguration **must not**:

- Have changes driven only by financial pressures
- Have changes imposed without prior consultation with staff and patients
- Duplicate existing services

The process of any merger should happen smoothly, following the principles detailed above. Staff terms and conditions should be protected throughout the process whilst ensuring that legislation is applied correctly.

Yours sincerely

Raj Jethwa
Head of the Health Policy and Economic Research Unit