HEMS Consultation
hemsconsultation@dhsspsni.gov.uk

22 January 2016

The establishment of a helicopter emergency service for Northern Ireland

Dear Sir/Madam

BMA Northern Ireland is both a Professional Association and a Trade Union which represents the medical profession in Northern Ireland across all Branches of Practice and our mission is, ‘we look after doctors so they can look after you.’

BMA has 169,000 members worldwide, and 75% of doctors and medical students are members in Northern Ireland.

BMA Northern Ireland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the establishment of a helicopter emergency service (HEMS) for Northern Ireland.

BMA Northern Ireland fully supports the establishment of a HEMS that is fully linked into the Northern Ireland Trauma Network. It is important the HEMS uses existing frameworks such as the Association of Air Ambulances and is guided by best practice as outlined in their Framework Document, including the establishment of a clinical advisory group. We are content that this should be commissioned through the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust.

In relation to the HEMS funding and operational model, BMA Northern Ireland is recommending that this is funded directly by the government to ensure sustainability of the service. We are not convinced that a partnership model based on charitable donations is appropriate for a trauma service.
BMA Northern Ireland believes that given the skills needed and advances in interventions in a trauma situation, it is vital that this is a doctor-paramedic model, to enable a rapid clinical response.

The document also seeks views on who the target patient groups should be and the home base location of the HEMS, we feel that the Clinical Advisory Group should determine these priorities.

Finally BMA Northern Ireland supports the proposal for collaborative working with other helicopter transport providers.

I look forward to the next steps in establishing a government funded HEMS and I hope that our comments will be taken into account. Please do not hesitate to contact, Judith Cross, Senior Policy Adviser, on 02890269687 or jcross@bma.org.uk if you require any further clarification on the issues raised or to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

John D. Woods

Dr John D Woods
BMA NI council chair