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 154,000, which continues to grow each year.

**Key points**

- The BMA supports measures introduced in Part 6 of the Bill to encourage transparency in the supply chains of UK medical goods and imports.
- We support amendments 93, 94 and 97 which would introduce further requirements on commercial organisations and ensure that public sector organisations take measures to safeguard fair and ethical practice in supply chains.

**Supply chains**

In the UK, the NHS spends in excess of £40 billion per annum on the procurement of goods and services. The supply chains that provide these commodities are global, and employ hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. If major suppliers of healthcare goods strive to ensure fair and ethical practices in the manufacture of their products, then the potential impact on global supply chains is vast. The BMA is at the forefront of campaigning for ethical procurement in the NHS, in order to encourage NHS organisations to incorporate ethical standards into their procurement processes and to ensure that consideration is given to the social impact of purchasing decisions. There is an uncomfortable paradox in providing healthcare in the NHS at the expense of workers’ health in its supply chains. There is a risk to the reputation of the NHS through inaction, but conversely the importance and spending power of the NHS presents a real opportunity for it to take a lead in ethical procurement.¹

The BMA is therefore pleased that the government is legislating within the Bill to encourage transparency in supply chains of UK medical goods and imports. However, we believe that more can be done to ensure that public sector organisations and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to take adequate measures to ensure fair and ethical practice in supply chains.

**Amendment 93**

The BMA supports amendment 93 tabled by Baroness Young of Hornsey, which extends the reporting requirement currently in place for commercial organisations to prepare a slavery and human trafficking statement for each financial year, to all public sector organisations. We believe that the NHS has a responsibility both as an employer and as the national health system in the UK to ensure that its practices do not negatively impact on the health and wellbeing of workers making medical goods outside the UK that ultimately supply our hospital and practices. We believe that the NHS must ensure that medical goods purchased are manufactured in conditions that adhere to international labour standards.
Amendment 94
The BMA believes that the definition of a commercial organisation within the Bill should be extended to include SMEs as defined by the Companies Act 2006. This is to ensure that the legislation covers all the companies that supply to the NHS, which includes a number of SMEs. The BMA believes that extending the definition of a commercial organisation to SMEs presents an opportunity with the introduction of the Public Contract Regulations which make procurement opportunities within the UK more accessible to smaller businesses. We therefore support amendment 94 tabled by Baroness Young of Hornsey.

Amendment 97
The BMA supports the requirement of commercial organisations to produce an annual statement, however we believe the reporting regulations should be extended to include a detailed plan of the organisation’s commitment to eradicate human trafficking and slavery. This should include reporting on the organisations policies in relation to slavery, and human trafficking, the risk assessment undertaken to expose risk areas, and the steps taken and resources used to manage the risk. The BMA believes that companies should have a thorough reporting system in place in order to effectively eradicate slavery throughout their supply chains as outlined in amendment 97.

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References

1 Definition: Ethical procurement is about the overall sourcing practices of purchasing organisation, such as NHS providers, and the step they take to ensure that employment conditions and workers’ rights, in the supply chains of the products and services the procure, are maintained in line with internationally recognised convention and local laws (as a minimum).

2 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/102/contents/made