



## **Terms of reference for the Healthcare Commission's investigation into Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust**

The Healthcare Commission routinely reviews data about mortality rates at NHS Trusts and follows up with individual trusts where there is cause for concern. Initial analysis of data from Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust compared with other trusts, and subsequent discussions with the trust, have caused the Healthcare Commission to be concerned about the effectiveness of the trust's own systems for monitoring mortality rates amongst patients. The Healthcare Commission has also recently received a number of concerns from individual patients and relatives, about standards of care at ward level.

The Healthcare Commission is therefore launching an investigation at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust. This will aim to establish whether the trust is maintaining appropriate standards in the management, provision and quality of its services.

This will include an examination of:

- The trust's arrangements for the collection, reporting, analysis and use of clinical data
- Mortality rates at the trust, and the ability of the trust's information systems to provide an accurate picture of mortality rates, so as to identify any potential problems
- Arrangements at the trust to ensure that patients are safe and that there is a good standard of care, particularly with regard to older patients
- The governance arrangements within the trust and in the local NHS to protect the safety of patients and scrutinise the quality of the care provided by the trust
- Any other matters that the Healthcare Commission considers arise out of, or are connected with, the matters above.

The investigation will focus on information and events since April 2005 in relation to these matters.

### **Additional Information**

The Healthcare Commission visited the trust on two occasions, requested and considered documentary evidence relating to the concerns, and carefully considered statistical information on outcomes for patients, before making its decision to launch this investigation.

The trust's data on outcomes for patients also caused the Dr Foster Unit at Imperial College London to bring concerns to the attention of the trust and the Healthcare Commission.

The investigation will be conducted by the Healthcare Commission under powers set out in section 52(2)(c) of the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003. This empowers the Commission to conduct investigations into the provision of any health care by or for a particular English NHS body. The Healthcare Commission's purpose in investigating such a body is to help it improve the quality of the health care that it provides, build or restore public confidence in the service, and to help the organisation and the wider NHS to learn lessons about how best to ensure the safety of patients.

As part of the investigation, the Healthcare Commission will conduct face to face and telephone interviews with individuals both from within and outside the trust who have information that is relevant to the issues listed above.

The Healthcare Commission will publish a report on the findings of the investigation, and will make recommendations as appropriate to the trust and other relevant bodies.

Where recommendations are made, the Healthcare Commission will assist all interested parties in the preparation of an action plan, in order to make any necessary improvements. Overseeing progress in the implementation of any actions to be undertaken by the trust will be the responsibility of Monitor, the regulator of NHS foundation trusts.