‘Chief executives or medical directors of trusts, or fellows or members of the Royal College of Physicians (RCP), may request an invited service review when there is an issue which is proving difficult to resolve, or on which they require independent advice.’
Invited service reviews

The primary aim of the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) is to promote the highest standards of medical practice in order to improve health and healthcare. One way in which we strive to meet this aim is by undertaking invited service reviews. This process supports physicians and trust management when they feel the practice of good clinical medicine is compromised, and is an important way of ensuring patient care and patient safety.

What is an invited service review?
Chief executives or medical directors of trusts may request an invited service review when there is an issue which is proving difficult to resolve, or on which they require independent advice. Fellows or members of the RCP may also request an ISR with agreement from their trusts’ directorate.

This may involve:
- clinical practices
- service delivery
- concerns over patient safety
- clinical team functioning
- clinical governance
- technical services
- workload issues
- provision of medicine in a merging trust, or in small and/or isolated medical units.

‘The great strength of the review process is the assembly of a team with genuine expertise in the relevant clinical/management arena.’

Medical director

How an invited service review works
An invited service review provides an opportunity for a trust to deal with problems at an early stage. The RCP acts independently of other authorities and is able to offer advice and recommendations in an environment of trust.

Any problem relating to the practice of clinical medicine, ie general internal medicine and all other medical specialties, will be considered for an invited service review.

The RCP has a dedicated medical director and team who coordinates a team of specialist experts to undertake the review. The review team analyses the situation using interviews with trust staff, review of documents and other appropriate methods.

The time taken to carry out a review visit will depend on the local circumstances. A visit will typically take two days, but shorter visits may be appropriate. In addition, there is contact before and after the visit itself including both immediate verbal feedback, and later, a written report with recommendations.

While this work is an important aspect of our core aim of promoting high standards, it has a specific resource allocation. It is therefore necessary for us to make a charge for visits.

How to request an invited service review
> Enquiries about the appropriateness of an invited service review should be addressed to the invited service review team (see overleaf for contact details).
> The individual requesting an invited service review should establish at an early stage that the request has the agreement of trust management (normally the medical director and chief executive).
> A proforma form should be completed and all relevant information provided. This will then be passed to the RCP medical director for invited service reviews, who will contact the requestee, usually by telephone.
> The initial telephone contact will enable the medical director for invited service reviews to understand the scope of the issue and to decide whether the RCP will be able to help.
> The medical director for invited service reviews may ask for additional information and discuss the potential review with other senior RCP officers.

Once it has been agreed that an invited service review will take place, the RCP will work with the trust to develop terms of reference, discuss the composition of the review team, decide who to interview and establish the programme for the review.

‘I cannot think of a more appropriate body with this authority and access to balanced experts.’

Medical director, NHS foundation trust