

Radiotherapy Board

STATEMENT ON THE SERVICE SPECIFICATIONS FOR RADIOTHERAPY SERVICES IN ENGLAND

NHS England has published [Service Specifications](#) for adult external beam radiotherapy which set out a network model for future service delivery with the establishment of 11 radiotherapy Operational Delivery Networks. Successful implementation of the specifications should improve patient access to high-quality, advanced and innovative radiotherapy by promoting collaboration and partnership working within Networks. Collaborative working and sharing of expertise within multi-disciplinary teams will lead to standardisation of clinical protocols and best practice across Networks, minimising variations in quality and ensuring patients can receive treatment for even the less-common cancers without the need to travel further for specialist radiotherapy.

The [Radiotherapy Board](#)¹ welcomes the ambitions set out in the new Service Specifications but warns successful implementation of the Networks model will require significant investment in IT infrastructure and solutions to develop and maintain efficient collaboration between radiotherapy departments. It is not yet clear whether such funding is going to be made available to the Networks. Without it, establishment of effective partnership working will be severely hindered.

An aim of the Network model is to provide greater workforce resilience and sustainability, and this offers opportunities for workforce transformation, including role expansion within the therapeutic radiographer and medical physics professions. There are, however, existing staff shortages within the non-surgical cancer workforce and any transformation requires appropriate workforce planning and investment. The Radiotherapy Board cautions that workforce gaps across all the disciplines involved in radiotherapy services - including clinical oncologists, therapeutic radiographers, medical physicists, clinical technologists and engineers - are likely to impact on the success of the Networks. Further investment in the workforce - both numbers and skills - will be required to deliver the workforce transformation across Networks effectively.

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¹ The Radiotherapy Board was established in 2013 by The Royal College of Radiologists, the Society and College of Radiographers and the Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine to provide guidance, oversight and support for the continuing development of high-quality radiotherapy services for cancer patients in the UK. It has representation from across the four UK nations and from other organisations closely involved in radiotherapy services.