Guidance on Engagement of BASHH with Commissioners and Other Bodies Involved in NHS Tendering.

The BASHH Board wish to issue guidance regarding the involvement of BASHH in the process of tendering GUM and sexual health services. In producing this guidance, the Board of BASHH wish to emphasise the following priorities.

As part of its charitable aims, BASHH seeks to uphold the standards for the delivery of clinical services. It does not have a view on the different merits of services which are provided for the NHS by Foundation Trusts, Acute Trusts, PCTs, the voluntary or private sectors. There are BASHH Fellows and Members working in all such organisations.

Where commissioners decide to tender NHS services, BASHH may be approached for confidential advice and guidance on the professional standards, clinical governance and other aspects of the services being tendered. In giving such advice, BASHH will strive to ensure that the standards of open access, confidentiality, clinical governance, diagnostic tests and management protocols are upheld to the highest professional standards.

The BASHH Board recognises the complexity of local tendering arrangements and that individual BASHH Fellows and Members may be working for a number of organisations who will be competing in the tender, or involved in setting the tender documents. Through the BASHH protocol on Declarations of Interests, we will strive to ensure that no one is involved in giving confidential information or advice to a commissioner who might have any interest in the tendering process, and that such conflicts of interest are declared so that those individuals involved with this have no conflict of interest, whether individually or through their own NHS employer. As a general rule, the persons within BASHH dealing with such a matter will be selected from a different region and Branch than the one where the tendering process is being carried out.

BASHH, however, does recognise the need to ensure that those clinicians who work in services or areas where tendering occurs, should know whether BASHH is involved. We will, therefore, inform the Branch Chair that BASHH is involved and state the level of its involvement. We will reiterate the Declaration of Interest Policy, and assert that no papers or discussions of the involvement of BASHH with the Primary Care Trust or other body will be forwarded or copied to any BASHH Fellow or Member other than those nominated to be involved, none of whom will have a conflict of interest. The Branch Chair will then be able to inform all the members of that Branch of BASHH involvement.

The responsibility and reporting of BASHH’s involvement in this work will be through the the Chair of the Clinical Governance Committee, directly to the BASHH President and will be reported to the Board.
The Board very much hopes that all BASHH members will be reassured about this process and will understand the need for BASHH to retain independence and credibility to ensure that those commissioning bodies requesting advice and guidance continue to do so in a manner that fully maintains the high standards of genitourinary, sexual health and HIV medicine.

The BASHH Board wish to make it clear that such advice given to commissioners will be separate and will not detract from individual advice given by BASHH to individual members. This is provided within Branches, by the CGC and the Board as well as where requested by Officers directly.

Finally, it is the intention of BASHH to ensure that its educational programme includes the opportunity to share experiences of tendering and for BASHH Fellows and Members to learn essential management skills required for producing tender documents and negotiating this complex process.

Dr Simon Barton, President  
On behalf of the Board of BASHH  

9 January 2008