



BMUS Position Statement

Sonographer workforce development without the support of statutory regulation

The British Medical Ultrasound Society (BMUS) has been commissioned by Health Education England (HEE) to produce guidance on career development and progression for sonographers. This document is nearing publication but multidisciplinary appeals to Government to start regulatory processes have been unsuccessful. Therefore, it is timely for the society to review its position on statutory regulation of sonographers. BMUS has been, and continues to be, an active key stakeholder, working in collaboration with other professional bodies and NHSE/I, in the development of a sustainable and growing sonographer workforce. Inexorable pressures within diagnostic imaging combined with the advent of community diagnostic centres, and the 28 day faster diagnostic standards required to detect cancer and chronic conditions earlier, only add to the current service delivery crisis. According to Sir Mike Richards¹, a minimum of 4000 radiographers are required if diagnostic targets are to be achieved, therefore growing the sonographer workforce remains a priority for the NHS, employers and key stakeholders, including BMUS.

BMUS is working with HEE, and in collaboration with key stakeholders, in the development of a career and progression framework for sonographers that supports new entry routes into the profession, as well as supporting development opportunities for advanced and consultant sonographer practitioners². Safe, effective, inclusive use of medical ultrasound is unreservedly advocated and supported by BMUS but on the understanding that it is delivered only by trained, accountable practitioners³. The implementation of an equitable career structure remains a priority for BMUS and the society will continue to work closely with key stakeholders and government organisations to achieve this. However, BMUS remains resolute in its opinion that maintaining and developing a safe, sustainable workforce with equal opportunities is dependent upon regulation. The continued absence of statutory regulation hampers education programmes, inhibits workforce growth, impacts upon recruitment from overseas and places a glass ceiling over the careers of many practitioners.

Regulation helps to safeguard the patients, employer and, importantly, the employee in instances of, or allegations of suboptimal practice. Regulation enables a flexible workforce who can fulfil their professional potential by working through the career and progression framework² and achieving the goals and ambitions of the advanced clinical practice framework⁴. BMUS cannot condone a two-tier workforce but without regulation, direct access post-graduate and undergraduate trained sonographers will be unable to attain the advanced and consultant roles described within both the sonographer career development and advanced clinical practice frameworks. As such, the flexible, accountable and clinically responsible workforce that is much needed to fulfil the faster diagnostic ambitions will be unable to practice at all levels required in modern NHS healthcare.

BMUS is not responsible for workforce planning; that remains the remit of NHSE/I and HEE. BMUS, however, is committed to providing continued advice and guidance on best practice and the safe and effective use of medical ultrasound. In this context, BMUS will continue to fully support

profession and workforce development whilst ardently advocating regulation of this essential allied health profession role.

1. Richards M. Diagnostics: Recovery and renewal: NHS England; 2020 [Available from: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BM2025Pu-item-5-diagnostics-recovery-and-renewal.pdf>].
2. HEE. Sonography: HEE; 2019 [Available from: <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/sonography>].
3. BMUS. Skill Mix - BMUS Position Statement: British Medical Ultrasound Society; 2017 [Available from: https://www.bmus.org/static/uploads/resources/Skill_Mix_Statement.pdf].
4. Health Education England. *Multi-professional framework for advanced clinical practice in England*. 2017; Available from: https://www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Multi-professional_framework_for_advanced_clinical_practice_in_England.pdf

BMUS Council
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