



**British Society
of Echocardiography**

Proposed Petition

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TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY IN COUNCIL THE HUMBLE PETITION OF THE CHARTERED COLLEGE OF ECHOCARDIOGRAPHERS SHEWETH AS FOLLOWS:

This Petition is submitted on the authority of a two thirds' majority resolution of the members of the proposed Chartered College of Echocardiographers (currently known as the British Society of Echocardiography or BSE) in general meeting on the 3rd of February 2022. The proposed change of name reflects the normal use of the descriptor College within professional medical institutions.

The British Society of Echocardiography (BSE) represents and supports clinical echocardiography professionals working at all levels and in all areas of the field. Our members are a uniquely diverse professional group including cardiac physiologists, cardiologists, physicians from many parent specialties including general medicine and critical care, clinical scientists, radiologists, anaesthetists, veterinarians, medical physicists, and radiographers. The BSE is the sole unifying regulator and voice of all echocardiographers working today in the UK.

Background

Echocardiography describes the performance of a detailed ultrasonic examination of the heart achieving both structural and functional data. The examination is undertaken by a skilled professional who works within a team to perform and independently report study findings. Each examination takes 45 minutes to perform and report. Echocardiographers require strong scientific, anatomical and physiological knowledge to interpret test findings. This test is the most requested inpatient and outpatient cardiological imaging examination and plays a vital role in general practice, cardiology, acute general medicine, anaesthetics and critical care practice.

The vital importance of echocardiography was recognised by the British Cardiovascular Society in 1991 when the founders of the British Society of Echocardiography acknowledged the need for a specific affiliate society to allow echocardiographers from around the UK to meet and exchange knowledge and ideas. Prior to this there was no other body governing the performance of echocardiography. The earliest priority for this new society was to educate and regulate echocardiographers through professional examination processes which remains the core of our work to this day. Within three years of inception the British Society of Echocardiography grew to become the largest affiliate society of the British Cardiovascular Society. Now in our 30th anniversary year we host 4374 members from around the globe.

The BSE is an incorporated charity governed by its Articles and a Board of Trustees. The Trustees are also the Company Directors. The Board is supported in its decision making by an Advisory Council which consists of members representing the wider membership and representation from allied professional groups and organisations. The work of the BSE is directed and run through sub-committees covering four key areas:

- Individual practitioner accreditation,
- Departmental accreditation and clinical standards,
- Professional education,
- Communication and advocacy

Members are required to subscribe to the BSE's Rules and Code of Professional Conduct and as such we are the defacto national regulator of echocardiography practice within the UK.

The BSE fulfils the current governance standards set out for us by the Charity Commission and has a strong financial position. The sources of our income are membership subscriptions, accreditation fees and educational events. We hold reserves of the order of £523,000, equivalent to 8 months' running costs.

Services to members

Individual practitioner accreditation

The BSE is the sole provider of examined accreditation processes for those practising echocardiography in the UK. We are widely considered to examine to an exemplary standard: holding an accreditation with the BSE is considered an essential requisite for appointment to a post as echocardiographer in the NHS.

Our records currently hold 3039 accredited echocardiographers who re-accredit through the College on a five yearly basis, enabling them to maintain the same level of skill that they achieved at the point of accreditation. Re-accreditation is an essential component of demonstrating ongoing competency in a 'craft' specialty, protecting patients and upholding standards.

We began our examination processes in 1997 offering accreditation in a single modality (transthoracic echocardiography). Since that time we have developed five further examination processes in transoesophageal echocardiography, critical care echocardiography, stress echocardiography, and latterly emergency cardiac imaging and echocardiography in patients with congenital cardiac conditions. These examination processes have been developed through collaboration with different affiliated societies who have approached the BSE to ask us to write, run and oversee these examinations reflecting our standing as the national hub for echocardiography in the UK.

Our year on year figures demonstrate an increasing uptake in the examinations we offer, now standing at approximately 430 examinations per annum.

Our examination processes involve written and viva voce components designed, written and run by a dedicated group of over 100 examiners drawn from around the UK. The examination process is rigorously quality assured through examiner training and re-training processes and psychometric data analysis. Performing as an examiner for the BSE is considered as an accolade within the profession of echocardiography.

Senior echocardiographers are eligible to apply for Fellow status with the BSE. This requires evidence of pre-eminence in service delivery, education and research within the field. To date we have awarded 34 such fellowships.

Departmental Accreditation

We are considered by our international peer societies to have been instrumental in driving forward the concept that safe practice relates to both an individual practitioner and the environment in which they work and operate. Our clinical standards department have accredited over sixty NHS and non-NHS echo providers and departments since we developed this process in 2005. Since that time the European Society of Echocardiography has followed suit with a mirrored programme.

Departmental accreditation is acknowledged as the 'kite-mark' of an echocardiography department. Accreditation is undertaken through both the submission of written evidence and a departmental visit carried out by our clinical standards team. Accreditation is achieved by departments evidencing both exemplary standards of patient care and clear focus on infrastructure, connectivity, team-working and training.

Attaining departmental accreditation is considered to be a significant achievement for a UK echocardiography department who can recruit and retain staff more readily on that basis.

Recently the clinical standards team have developed new processes to quality assure 'departments without walls' such as critical care echo services where the workload is not location-defined.

Professional education

The BSE provides core professional education for echocardiographers both in training and following the achievement of accreditation.

Research

The British Society of Echocardiography uses its national position to co-ordinate collaborative projects between regional networks. This produces peer-reviewed publications and contributes to the development of scientific knowledge in the field.

Guidelines

The BSE designs and publishes the majority of echocardiographic practice guidelines used in UK practice. We recruit international experts to lead guideline development and publish these through a peer-reviewed process. Guideline development is one of the keyways in which we engage global colleagues. Our guideline titles and content are reviewed on a five yearly rolling basis. Content is available to all members through our website and in peer-reviewed journals.

Communication

We actively engage with the membership on two key levels:

Member information: through our website, regular e-newsletters, blogs, social media and ECHO, a quarterly journal published by the BSE.

Our regular communications provide key functional information and ensure we can disseminate urgent information; for example, health and safety guidelines were sent to all our members during the COVID-19 pandemic protecting our staff nationwide. These urgent clinical guidelines were updated per imaging modality on a monthly basis. We also provide on-line learning for members and maintain an on-line record of their progression towards accreditation and re-accreditation.

Scientific publication: through our scientific journal Echo Research and Practice.

The BSE work in partnership with on-line publishing house *Springer* to publish peer reviewed scientific articles focussed solely on the practice of echocardiography. There are no other echo-focussed scientific journals within the UK market. The Editorial Board and Editors in Chief are drawn from international experts in every field of echocardiography providing a broad educational base for our members who work in a wide variety of medical arenas. The journal publishes original research articles and international collaborative guidelines written and commissioned by the BSE. A recent example guideline has achieved 56 citations and >20,000 views reflecting the broad reach of our published work.

Advocacy

The BSE has established a Resilience for Leaders programme, to support echocardiographers leading teams experiencing burnout or high levels of sickness. The successful pilot has recently completed and the programme was extended at the end of 2021. A shared resources portal is also being developed to share recruitment and development resources to all leaders and teams.

National and International reach

Governmental consultation

The BSE is routinely consulted by governmental bodies as the voice and opinion of echocardiography in the UK.

International guidelines

We have co-authored over twenty international echocardiographic guidelines with our international equivalent societies, the European and American Societies for Echocardiography.

Advantage to patients and the public of incorporation by Royal Charter

Recognition and identity for an under-recruited workforce

Echocardiography is a high-volume service providing >1.6 million tests per year (2018-19 data). Current BSE data suggests the profession is 20% under-recruited prior to the pandemic with 5% or more of tests not being delivered within the nationally recognised quality standard of six-weeks waiting time.

Delivery of echocardiography to the patients who need it is now further challenged by the impact of the pandemic and changes to guidelines where access to echocardiography is crucial to preventing mortality and morbidity: such as, NICE guideline on Heart Valve Disease.

Allied professional societies have recognised echocardiographer under-recruitment as a limiting factor in patient care: for example the Heart Failure Alliance list addressing echocardiography workforce issues amongst the top three priorities to meet the needs of patient with heart failure in the UK.

This position is supported by two recent key reports.

The Richards Report: Professor Sir Mike Richards' report of October 2020 on 'Diagnostics: Recovery and Renewal' outlines the annual increase in demand for echocardiography estimated at 5.7% per annum.

"it is clear that workforce capacity has not kept up with demand. This is particularly the case for echocardiography."

Incorporation by Royal Charter would strongly identify the professional voice of echocardiography facilitating full engagement with the Department of Health in addressing workforce issues and attracting highly skilled science graduates into the profession. Addressing the issue of the echocardiographer workforce through incorporation is made more pressing by the imminent development of diagnostic outpatient hubs (NHS Long-term plan) where the dual risks of increasing workload and 'silo working' threaten quality.

Preservation of quality standards

Incorporation by Royal Charter would elevate our accreditation examinations to Chartered status allowing the award of a robust post-nominal identifier for the workforce at both accreditation and fellowship level. This would also enable NHS and non-NHS appointment committees to formally recognise the status of Chartered echocardiographers protecting patients and preserving standards.

Incorporation by Royal Charter would give accredited departments Chartered status facilitating the appointments of echocardiographers to a department, providing negotiation support with higher hospital management and strongly identify excellent standards of care to patients using the department.

Incorporation by Royal Charter would guard against the development of unregulated examinations or departmental standards which do not reflect the gold-standard for which we are internationally recognised.

YOUR PETITIONERS therefore most humbly pray that Your Majesty may be graciously pleased in the exercise of Your Royal Prerogative to grant a Charter to Your Petitioners in the terms of the draft herewith submitted or in such other terms as may to Your Majesty seem proper.
And Your Petitioners will ever pray etc.

SIGNED AND SEALED this day, the YYY in the year two thousand and ZZZ

By the President of the British Society of Echocardiography (proposed Chartered College of Echocardiographers):

In the presence of: