Introduction
The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP), launched the RCGP Centre for Commissioning in October 2010 in response to the government’s healthcare reforms, set out in its White Paper, Equity and Excellence: liberating the NHS.

Set up in partnership with the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement (NHS Institute), the Centre aims to equip GPs and GP practices with the skills, competencies and expertise required to deliver effective healthcare commissioning which ensures patient-focused and high quality healthcare, leading to improved health outcomes.

Our Mission
We support those involved in clinically-led commissioning to continually improve health outcomes by developing the required skills and knowledge.

Our Vision
Through effective collaboration between clinicians and other professionals, we will contribute to improving commissioning that will ensure local communities receive the healthcare they need.

Our Values
• Achieving excellence
• Improving outcomes
• Effective collaboration
• Empowering communities
• Commitment to caring.

The Centre provides a range of learning resources on clinically-led commissioning. This Briefing Guide is for GPs and clinical commissioning groups and is written to highlight the crucial role that new GPs play in the commissioning agenda both now and in the future. It explains the background to the First5 initiative, the current experience of First5 GPs and makes some recommendations for going forward.

Background
First5 is an initiative set up by the RCGP to support new GPs from completion of training to the first point of revalidation at five years.

First5 is a way for the RCGP to play a key role in supporting new GPs through their crucial first few years of independent practice. First5 includes all GPs within five years of qualification, irrespective of their job title.

There are five key pillars of First5:
• Connecting with the College – Promoting a sense of belonging and appropriate representation for the First5 cohort within the College
• Facilitating networks – Encouraging peer support and mentoring through the development of local networks using the RCGP faculty structure
• Supporting revalidation – Offering support through revalidation for those in the first five years post-CCT
• Career mentorship – Highlighting the opportunities a career in general practice offers and helping new GPs get the most out of being a GP
• Continuing professional development (CPD) – Identifying areas of CPD which members in the first five years feel are not well provided and developing materials which will address their learning needs.

All five pillars of First5 are relevant to the commissioning agenda. First5 GPs are the newest members of the profession and are therefore likely to be most affected by the proposed changes in the longer term by having a longer remaining career lifetime than more established GPs.

One of our key roles at the Centre is to ensure that First5 GPs understand what commissioning will mean for them.

This includes providing opportunities for First5 GPs to get involved in their local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs).
Current Experience
During 2011, the First5 team and the RCGP Centre for Commissioning have held three workshops for First5 GPs to provide an introduction to commissioning.

Delegates were asked what kind of commissioning roles they aimed to take on and the majority of delegates wanted to know about how commissioning would affect them as a practising GP. However, 24% also had an interest in taking on a lead role in their practice and a further 28% wanted to have a lead role in their local clinical commissioning group.

This suggests that many First5 GPs would be keen to engage with the commissioning process if given the opportunity to do so. However, a survey of First5 GPs carried out recently has shown that there is a lack of information and engagement of First5 GPs at a local level. Of 683 respondents, more than half wanted to be moderately or fully informed about their local clinical commissioning group, but only 22% reported that they were. The survey also explored involvement of First5 GPs in the plans and activities of their local clinical commissioning group. More than half felt moderately or completely excluded.

Next Steps
The First5 initiative is about supporting and empowering new GPs to allow them to develop as clinicians and leaders and to tap into their energy, drive and enthusiasm and the fresh thinking and new ideas they can bring to the commissioning process.

The Centre, through its workshops and learning resources aims to ensure that all GPs are fully aware of the principles of clinically-led commissioning and the impact on their practice. Our approach is:

- Open door – to work with existing Pathfinders to actively encourage First5 GPs to get involved
- Mentoring – Encouraging more experienced GPs to mentor First5 GPs
- Peer support – to provide peer support through the formation of First5 CPD groups. A guide to help First5 GPs form and run their own group effectively can be downloaded from the First5 website (http://www.rcgp.org.uk/new_professionals/first5.aspx).

Further Information
For more information about the First5 initiative, visit www.rcgp.org.uk/first5 or email first5@rcgp.org.uk.
Join the ‘RCGP First5’ Facebook group or follow ‘RCGPfirst5’ on Twitter.

About the author
Dr Taylor is First5 Clinical Lead at RCGP. First5 is a new initiative to support new GPs from the end of training through the first five years of independent practice (see more details at: www.rcgp.org.uk/first5). Clare is a GP in inner city Birmingham and is also a researcher at the University of Birmingham. She was chair of the Associates in Training Committee at RCGP 2008 ad 2009 and is now a deputy editor of the RCGP trainee journal, InnovAiT. The First5 team is working with the RCGP Centre for Commissioning to ensure First5 GPs are actively involved in the commissioning agenda by delivering tailored educational events.
The RCGP Centre for Commissioning is a brand of the Royal College of General Practitioners

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