**Health Service Circular**

**Local Authority Circular**

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sets out a specific action on the part of the recipient with a deadline where appropriate

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**Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation White Paper and Reducing Health Inequalities: an Action Report**

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**For action by:**

Health Authorities (England) - Chairman
Health Authorities (England) - Chief Executive
Health Authorities (England) - Directors of Public Health
Health Authorities (England) - Chief Nurse
Special Health Authorities - Chief Executive
Special Health Authorities - Chairs
NHS Trusts - Chairs
NHS Trusts - Chief Executives
NHS Trusts - Medical Directors
NHS Trusts - Director of Nursing
London Borough Councils (England) - Chief Executives
Metropolitan District Councils (England) - Chief Executives
County Councils (England) - Chief Executives
Shire Unitary Authorities (England) - Chief Executives
Council of the Isles of Scilly - Chief Executive
Common Council of the City of London - Chief Executive
Primary Care Groups - Chairs
Directors of Social Services

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**For information to:**

Health Authorities (England) - Directors of Communication
Health Authorities (England) - Health Promotion Managers
NHS Trusts - Directors of Communication
NHS Trusts - Health Promotion Units
Community Health Councils - Chief Officers
Community Health Councils - Chairs
Dental Postgraduate Deans
Medical School Deans
Regional Advisers in General Practice
General Dental Practitioners
Pharmacists
Optometrists

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6th July 1999
Summary


2. These two documents set out the Government's strategy for health for the next 10 years. They bring a new and important focus to the promotion of health and the prevention of ill-health. If the policies set out in the White Paper are implemented successfully, around 300,000 deaths could be deferred and the gain in terms of added years of healthy active life could be enormous. The challenge is great, but the potential gain is immense.

3. The health strategy set out in the White Paper is centred on four priority areas (cancer, coronary heart disease and stroke, accidents and mental health). Action to tackle these important areas of ill-health is set in the context of both a Government-wide agenda to address the underlying causes (through, for example, measures to combat poverty, to improve education and work opportunities, and to improve the environment including the quality of the housing stock); also through the wider public health agenda, specifically action to tackle smoking, to reduce teenage pregnancies and to combat communicable diseases. All these strands of activity are brought together by a new emphasis on partnership between the individual, local organisations and the Government. The final part of the White Paper spells out how this new health strategy will be delivered at local level, between NHS organisations, local authorities and the independent sector, working closely with individuals and local communities. Delivery of the White Paper targets is firmly rooted in the performance management process for the NHS. Throughout, the over-arching goal is to improve health and cut health inequality.

Action

4. Health Authorities and Local Authorities should work together to:

- set out with partners in their Health Improvement Programmes for 2000/03 their plans to implement action;
- on the four national targets
- on additional local targets
- on tackling local health inequalities
- produce a core internet statement based on the Health Improvement Programmes for 2000/03;
- as local health champions, ensure that all local organisations work to promote health, wellbeing and social inclusion;
• provide the strategic focus for community development within the new Duty of Partnership between the NHS and local Government;

• use the new partnership provisions in the Health Act to provide resources in support of any local authority function where to do so would lead to improvements in health. The operational flexibilities provided to develop pooled budgets, lead commissioner and integrated provider arrangements will improve health and cut health inequality;

• ensure that in implementing the modernisation programmes for the NHS and social services they take full account of *Saving lives: Our Healthier Nation*;

• ensure that Primary Care Groups and Primary Care Trusts have robust plans and capacity to fulfil their roles in health improvement and in the reduction of inequality;

• ensure that the multi-disciplinary public health workforce has appropriate capacity and capabilities to deliver the health strategy.

Further Guidance

5. A technical supplement on definitions and data sources will be published in the Autumn to aid the local selection and monitoring of targets. Further guidance on specific initiatives within *Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation* will be published in due course.
Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation White Paper
and Reducing Health Inequalities: An Action Report

1. The White Paper sets out the Government's strategy for health:

- to improve the health of the population as a whole by increasing the length of life and the number of years people spend free from illness;
- to improve the health of the worst off in society and to narrow the health gap.

National Targets

2. The delivery of those goals is focused on four specific targets aimed at reducing death rates in the four priority areas of cancer, coronary heart disease and stroke, accidents and mental health. The four specific targets to be achieved by 2010 are:

- to reduce the death rate from cancer in people under 75 by at least one fifth;
- to reduce the death rate from coronary heart disease and stroke and related diseases in people under 75 by at least two fifths;
- to reduce the death rate from suicide and undetermined injury by at least one fifth;
- to reduce the death rate from accidents by at least one fifth and to reduce the rate of serious injury from accidents by at least one tenth.

A three way partnership

3. Action to deliver these targets needs to be taken forward at different levels. The White Paper describes those policies which are being taken across Government which will start to address the underlying causes of ill-health, such as poverty, worklessness, poor educational achievement, poor housing. But action also needs to be taken at local level by NHS bodies and local government working together to address local priorities for action. And individuals can themselves take informed decisions which will benefit their health, for example by adopting healthy diets, keeping physically active, and above all avoiding smoking. To deliver the health strategy action at all three levels needs to be brought together in new forms of partnership. This approach is described in more detail in the White Paper.

Wide ranging action

4. In addition, the White Paper announces a wide range of actions which will support the implementation of the health strategy.
Healthy Citizens

- the **Healthy Citizens** programme will help give people the information they need to make informed decisions. It encourages the development of health skills for key population groups, especially children. It focuses on the promotion of first aid skills, including resuscitation techniques, and includes new investment in defibrillators in public places. The links to **NHS Direct** are brought out.

- the second main element is the **Expert Patients** programme which will help more people with chronic illness to take control over the management of their condition.

Higher Standards

5. Clear and consistent standards need to be set for public health programmes. The White Paper proposes:

- the establishment of a **Health Development Agency** (to supersede the Health Education Authority from January) to map and disseminate the evidence base for public health, and to set standards for public health and public health practice.

6. Those standards will be informed by the development of an R&D strategy for public health, and the establishment of a **fast track development programme for young public health academics to ensure academic excellence**. In addition, Health Authorities are to produce a **core internet statement** based on their Health Improvement Programmes, which will give experts around the world the opportunity to suggest improvements to those Programmes based on international evidence.

Multi-Professional Public Health Workforce

7. To deliver the new agenda to the new, high standards that are expected, we need a modern and expert public health workforce. The White Paper announces that a public health workforce national development plan will be drawn up, of which key elements are

- a **public health skills audit** to enable health organisations to develop the right mix of skills for the future.

- a **multi-disciplinary, multi-professional public health workforce** where the lack of a medical qualification is no barrier to career advancements, hence

- creation of the new post of **Specialist in Public Health**.

- new and **strengthened roles for nurses** as public health practitioners.

- recognition of the potential of **medical care epidemiologists** in NHS Trusts to develop the capacity to measure and improve health care outcomes.
New Strategy for Public Health Information

8. Finally, to ensure the right information is available at national and local level, the White Paper announces the development of a new public health information strategy:

- a review of national sources of public health information.
- provision of a public health observatory in each health region.
- a series of disease registers creating population-based information on people with chronic disease.
- a more systematic use of the annual reports by Directors of Public Health.

Effective Implementation

9. These new initiatives will provide the stimulus to reorient public health at national and local level. The priority which NHS organisations and social services departments should give to public health has already been stated in last autumn's National Priorities Guidance, and the White Paper shows how investment in public health can achieve marked improvements in mortality and morbidity rates for diseases of the circulatory system and for cancer. It also emphasises the importance for public health of strengthening the focus on influencing factors outside the traditional health field, at national and local levels.

10. The two White Papers, "Modernising Social Services" and "The new NHS": modern, dependable", set out new approaches to facilitate closer working between local agencies. In particular, Health Improvement Programmes and Health Action Zones provide the means for health and local authorities to work together with other independent bodies, as well as local communities and individuals, to pursue joint objectives. This third White Paper, "Saving lives: Our Healthier Nation" emphasises how these new mechanisms, together with community plans if they are introduced, will be a key part of the delivery system for the achievement of the health strategy. It also describes the roles of the key NHS bodies including health authorities and NHS Trusts, as well as of local authorities. In particular it draws out the responsibilities of primary care trusts, when established, for working with the communities they serve and other local agencies to improve health and reduce inequalities. It clarifies the differences between the roles of health authorities and primary care organisations.

11. Implementation Task Forces, reporting to the Chief Medical Officer, will be set up alongside the Cancer Action Team announced at the Prime Minister's 20 May Cancer Seminar to drive progress towards the targets in the first year. Membership and terms of reference of the Task Forces are yet to be announced.

Public Health Development Fund

12. Underpinning the entire strategy is a new Public Health Development Fund worth £96 million over 3 years. £24 million is available in the current year and is being invested in a range of new projects and initiatives which will facilitate implementation of the new health strategy overall.
Reducing Health Inequalities: An Action report

13. Reducing health inequalities is a key aim of our strategy and a shared priority for health and social services in the National Priorities Guidance. Following last year’s report of the independent inquiry into inequalities in health (the Acheson report), we are publishing with Saving lives an action report on what is being done across Government and at local level to tackle health inequalities. This is the most comprehensive programme of such work ever undertaken in this country.

14. Health and social services, working with other agencies, are required to develop action programmes and to set local targets to address areas of particular local health inequality.
Associated Documentation


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