Modernising Mental Health Services: safe, sound and supportive.

(incorporating emerging findings of the National Service Framework External Reference Group)

For action by:
- Health Authorities (England) - Chairmen
- Health Authorities (England) - Chief Executives
- Health Authorities (England) - Chief Nurses
- Local Authorities - London Boroughs Chief Executives
- Local Authorities - Metropolitan Districts Chief Executives
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- Local Authorities - Unitary Authority Chief Executives
- NHS Trusts - Chairmen
- NHS Trusts - Chief Executives
- Social Services Directors - England
- Social Services Chairmen - England

For information to:
- Community Health Councils - Chief Officers
- Consortia Business Managers
- Consortia Chairs, for distribution to members
- Directors of Education & Training
- Drug Action Team Co-ordinators
- Medical Schools - Deans
- Post Graduate Deans
- Regional Advisers in General Practice
- Representative bodies for Health Services and Local Government, professional organisations and statutory bodies, Royal Colleges and Health Advocacy Groups

Further details from:
- Elaine Edgar
  Wellington House
  133-135 Waterloo Road
  LONDON
  SE1 8UG
  0171 972 4489
  Website: www.doh.gov.uk/nsf/mentalh.htm
Additional copies of this document can be obtained from:

Department of Health
PO Box 410
Wetherby
LS23 7LN

Fax 0990 210 266

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Modernising Mental Health Services: safe, sound and supportive.
Incorporating emerging findings of the National Service Framework External Reference Group

Summary

1. This HSC/LAC sets out the Government's strategy for mental health services for the new millennium. It also incorporates the National Service Framework External Reference Group's emerging findings.

2. The strategy provides the context for the National Service Framework (NSF) on mental health which will be published in Spring 1999. The HSC/LAC summarises work in hand on the NSF and outlines the action which health and local authorities working with their partners need to undertake between now and April 2000.

Action

3. Planning the local implementation of the mental health strategy through the NSF for mental health in 1999/2000 will be a major task which should be reflected in the forward programme set out in the local Health Improvement Programme and in the commitment of all the local players to their part in that. In the context of the emerging findings, health and local authorities with their partners will need to ensure that they:

- jointly assess the mental health and social care needs of their population
- audit present performance in mental health services
- quantify significant gaps and pressures, and prepare joint investment plans to address them
- agree local priorities for action, based on the strategy document and the emerging findings.

Chief Executives of Health Authorities and Trusts and Directors of Social Services should bring this circular to the attention of staff working in mental health services, including GPs.

Background

4. Mental health is a key issue for health and social care services. Mental health services are an essential component of a modern, decent and inclusive society and the public, users, and
carers, deserve modern, accessible, and responsive services, which are safe, sound and supportive.

5. HSC 98/074 set out a programme of work to develop NSFs which will improve the quality and consistency of services in a number of key areas. Building on the service frameworks for cancer (Calman-Hine) and paediatric intensive care, coronary heart disease and mental health, both key themes in Our Healthier Nation, are the first two new NSFs to be developed. The next will be for older people.

6. The new NHS places quality at the centre of the NHS for the twenty-first century. The consultation document on quality in the NHS - A First Class Service - defined the component parts in more detail:

- setting clear national standards through evidence-based NSFs, and the National Institute for Clinical Excellence, which will promote clinical and cost effectiveness and advise on best practice.

- delivering quality standards through ensuring that national standards and guidance are reflected in the delivery of services, within the framework of clinical governance, backed up by lifelong learning and rigorous professional self-regulation.

- monitoring quality standards through a new Commission for Health Improvement, strengthening the assessment of performance in the NHS, and a new National Survey of Patient and User Experience.

7. The recently launched White Paper Modernising Social Services similarly includes proposals for ensuring the delivery of high quality personal social services, in the context of the wider Best Value framework for local authority services. Its key principles for adult services are promoting independence, improving consistency and convenient user-centred services.

8. Modernising Health and Social Services : National Priorities Guidance 1999/00 - 2001/02 is addressed jointly to health and social services, and endorses the principles of partnership and collaboration. Integrated policy and practice development will be essential in developing and working towards the standards set out in this NSF.

A National Service Framework for Mental Health

9. The NSF is being developed with the advice of an external reference group which brings together health and social care professionals and managers, service users and carers, and those in partner agencies and other relevant groups.

10. The attached document "Modernising Mental Health Services" which sets out the Government's strategy and the emerging findings of the external reference group for mental health, includes the areas in which national standards are likely to be developed over the next 6 months. It covers health and social care, including health promotion, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and day care, and encompasses primary and specialist care and the roles of
partner agencies. It will provide the basis for the NSF to be published in Spring 1999. It is being published now to help the NHS and local authorities, together with partner agencies, through Health Improvement Programmes to begin to plan for implementation from April 1999.

11. The NSF will:

- set **national standards** and define **service models** for a specific service or care group
- put in place programmes to support **implementation**
- establish **performance indicators** against which progress within an agreed timescale will be measured.

The standards will reflect an ambitious vision, which will cover both health and social care. It will take time and sustained effort to achieve. Progress will be assured through intermediate milestones which will be systematically monitored.

**Underpinning Programmes**

12. Following consultation, the White Paper *Our Healthier Nation* will confirm mental health as a key theme. Mental health is also a national priority with the lead role shared by health and social services in *Modernising Health and Social Services: National Priorities Guidance 1999/00 - 2001/02*. Mental health will be a priority for the development of Health Improvement Programmes, for the new arrangements for commissioning services, and for Primary Care Groups; within *Working Together* and *Information for Health* (the Human Resource and Information Strategies for the NHS); within an early phase of the National Survey of Patient and User Experience; and will receive priority in other national initiatives.

13. The local implementation of the NSF for mental health will be a key priority for health and local authorities and partner agencies. It will be supported by a range of underpinning programmes including:

- R&D, commissioned through the R&D Directorate, to strengthen the evidence base and fill key gaps in our present knowledge base; this may include modelling to enhance understanding of the best balance of interventions to secure the required outcomes.
- clinical decision support systems including clinical guidelines, clinical audit methodologies and appraisal, which will be commissioned through the National Institute for Clinical Excellence.
- the development of the framework of clinical governance in every NHS organisation, backed up by lifelong learning and rigorous professional self-regulation.
- *Working Together* (the NHS human resource strategy) sets three strategic aims for the NHS - to ensure a quality workforce, in the right numbers, with the right skills and diversity, organised in the right way; to demonstrate an improving quality of working life for staff; and to address management capacity and capability. NSFs are highlighted as a key area in which the pivotal role of adequate workforce planning, effective personal and organisation development, and staff involvement must be recognised.

- *Modernising Social Services* explains how the Government will develop a national training strategy for social care staff.

- *Information for Health* (the NHS information strategy) sets out an ambitious programme to exploit developing information technology to transform the delivery of health services and improve the health of the nation. Better information will be available for the public, professionals and managers. Again NSFs are highlighted as key areas for early support.

- partnership working between health and local authorities in the context of *Partnership in Action* and the Government's vision for local government.

- a communications strategy which will enable an inclusive approach at all levels, and build understanding and ownership.

14. Initially, the NSF external reference group will assess work already completed or in hand to identify the most significant issues for early prioritisation within each of the underpinning programmes. For example, the review of the early NHS R&D programmes, commissioned by the Central Research and Development Committee, will provide the stocktake to support decisions about priorities for research and development. We will maintain the synergy between the vision, the NSF programme and the evolving arrangements for commissioning services, for example through developing a model service agreement for mental health.

**Resources**

15. In the first year, 1999/2000, some £146m extra will be invested in better care. £116m will be allocated to Health Authorities and Local Authorities, according to need, and for Health Authorities by assessing a combination of morbidity of the population, state of existing services and capacity to make effective use of new funds. Full details of allocation methodology for Health Authorities and planning requirements will be sent out over the next week. Local Authorities will receive a circular of guidance on the Mental Health Grant in January 1999. A further sum of around £30m is already included within next year's overall provision for drugs and staff education and training.

**Performance Assessment**

16. At the same time early work is in hand to build on the consultation exercise on the NHS Performance Assessment Framework to begin to establish performance indicators for the NHS. Complementary work is underway to develop performance indicators for personal social
services linked to the broader plans described in *Modernising Social Services*. The six domains are:

- health improvement
- fair access
- effective delivery of appropriate health and social care
- efficiency
- user and carer experience
- health and social outcomes of care.

17. This will draw on a range of programmes including the work of the Central Health Outcomes Unit and in time the National Survey of Patient and User Experience. The aim is to establish a balanced package of performance indicators which will assess whether national standards are being delivered within agreed timescales.

18. The Commission for Health Improvement, the Social Services Inspectorate and the Audit Commission will each play a role in monitoring progress.

**Implementation**

19. Implementation of the National Service Framework will be co-ordinated by the Department of Health and regional offices of the NHS Executive and Social Care Group.

20. The first cut of the NSF for mental health will be published in Spring 1999. The NSF will continue to evolve as new evidence is available, as progress is made on the underpinning programmes of work, and as we learn through implementation.

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*This circular has been issued by:*

**Permanent Secretary**

**Chief Executive**