

To: Health Authorities [England] - Chairs
Health Authorities [England] - Chief Executives
Health Authorities [England] - Directors of Human Resources
Health Authorities [England] - Directors of Primary Care

Quarry House
Quarry Hill
Leeds LS2 7UE
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28 June 2001

Dear Colleague,

**THE PROVISION OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICES
FOR GENERAL MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS AND THEIR STAFF**

Good occupational health and safety is an essential part of the effective management of the health of people at work. It can reduce work-related ill health and accidents and improve employee morale and performance.

The NHS Plan, published by the Secretary of State in July 2000, announced that:

Occupational health services, already a requirement in Hospitals and Community Trusts, would be extended to general practitioners and their staff from 1 April 2001.

A total of £6 million has been included in Health Authority main allocations for 2001/02 to fund these services which will cover staff in PCTs and PCGs.

The guidance issued with this letter sets out the range of occupational health and safety services to be commissioned by Health Authorities in England on behalf of all GPs and their staff. The guidance also includes details of service delivery standards and suggested audit protocols. Health Authorities should ensure that GPs and their staff are able to access the full range of services by March 2002.

In the first year of provision, and in order not to place an added administrative burden on newly formed PCTs, occupational health and safety services for PCTs should also be commissioned by Health Authorities alongside those for PCGs and all other GPs. This arrangement will be reviewed before allocations are made for 2002/03.

In this first year of implementation, GPs and their staff will not have access to a full range of services until later in the year, following needs and risk assessments by provider(s). Health Authorities should ensure, that when commissioning services, they arrange for access, as a minimum, to a telephone advice service as soon as a contract is agreed. The availability of this service should be advertised to GPs and their staff.

By way of this letter I am asking Health Authorities to undertake the following actions:

- Commission occupational health and safety services from 1 st April 200 1 for all GPs and their staff, as well as staff in PCGs and PCTs.
- Ensure that GPs and their staff have access, as a minimum, to a telephone advice service whilst the full service is being introduced.
- Ensure that all services commissioned meet the service delivery standards described in the attached guidance.

Should you have any queries arising from this letter or guidance can you please contact Julian Topping on 0113 2545756 (Occupational Health Issues) or Mark Smith on 0113 2546385 (primary care issues).

Finally I would add that the guidance issued with this letter was due to be issued in May. You will appreciate however that the General Election precluded us from doing so. I would therefore be grateful if you would ensure that all PCTs, PCGs and individual GP practices are made aware of the information contained in this letter and guidance to ensure commissioning can begin as soon as possible.

Further copies of the guidance can be obtained by *faxing* or e-mailing Department of Health Publications, on 01623 724524 or doh@prolog.uk.com quoting reference 23922 or by accessing the Department of Health website at: www.doh.gov.uk/healthandsafety

Yours sincerely,



Dr Sheila Adam
Health Services Director

Copy: NHS Trusts [England] - Chairs
NHS Trusts [England] - Chief Executives
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Regional Directors
Regional Office - Primary Care Leads