

Health and Social Services Committee

HSS(2)–18–06(p8)

Meeting date: Wednesday 13 December 2006

Venue: Committee Room 1, Senedd, Cardiff Bay

Title: Toolkit for Sustainable Development

Purpose

To inform the Health and Social Services Committee of progress in developing the Sustainable Development Toolkit for the NHS in Wales.

Summary / Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note progress on this work.

Background

Section 121 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 requires the National Assembly for Wales to "...make a scheme setting out how it proposes, in the exercise of its functions, to promote Sustainable Development...". Section 79 of the Government of Wales Act 2006 (to come into force immediately after the day on which the First Minister is appointed following the National Assembly for Wales election in May 2007) places the duty on Welsh Ministers.

The National Assembly for Wales' revised scheme, Starting to Live Differently was adopted in March 2004, and in its second Action Plan for the period 2004-2007 acknowledged that the public sector in Wales as a major employer, landholder, purchaser of goods and services, has the potential to be an exemplar for Sustainable Development. As a result, the Action Plan has a commitment to "...determine key steps for the NHS in Wales to take forward the agenda...".

Sustainable Development and the NHS in Wales

There is sound evidence, perhaps most cogently set out in the King's Fund report: Claiming the Health Dividend: Unlocking the Health benefits of NHS spending (2002), regarding the tremendous potential the NHS has to contribute to Sustainable Development. It can do so both through the services it develops and provides with its partners, and through its economic power as employer, purchaser of goods and services, cause of travel, producer of waste, consumer of energy and commissioner of building works.

The Department for Health and Social Services (DHSS) and the Office of the Chief Medical Officer (OCMO), in partnership with the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC), are working jointly

to take this agenda forward. A Steering Group, chaired by the Director of the NHS Confederation in Wales, and comprising representatives from Local Health Boards (LHBs), NHS Trusts, Welsh Health Estates, Value Wales, Assembly officials, the SDC and the Welsh Local Government Association has met to discuss the agenda.

As a result of these meetings, in April 2006, DHSS and OCMO issued a Welsh Health Circular that included a Policy Statement on Sustainable Development: WHC(2006)029: A Healthy Sustainable Wales – the NHS Contribution. The Policy Statement recites the five inter-linked guiding principles from the UK wide Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development; One Future, Different Paths (2005), and provides a commitment that DHSS and OCMO will, in partnership with the SDC, develop and implement a Toolkit for Sustainable Development, to provide guidance and support so that sustainable development becomes a core theme in processes across NHS Wales.

Designed for Life, the Welsh Assembly Government's 10-Year Framework for creating a world class health service by 2015, provides that by March 2008 all LHBs and NHS Trusts will achieve the gold or platinum level of the Corporate Health Standard. The Welsh Health Circular also provides organisations with a timetable and plan to meet this action.

By issuing this Policy Statement the Welsh Assembly Government demonstrated that the NHS recognised its responsibilities.

The Sustainable Development Toolkit

The purpose of the Toolkit is to set out how individual LHBs, NHS Trusts and local NHS contractors can assess their current policy and practice with regard to Sustainable Development. It will focus on specific areas of practice and performance, allow self assessment of the current position, and indicate how local performance could be improved. It will also provide an initial steer on how Sustainable Development principles should in future be reflected in regional reconfiguration plans and in commissioning services.

The Toolkit contains the following eleven key achievement areas:

- Corporate Management Policy;
- Health Improvement;
- New Building;
- Patient Engagement;
- Strategic Planning and Commissioning;
- Employment and Skills;
- Procurement (cross-referenced to the Public Sector Sustainable Procurement Assessment Tool);
- Transport and Travel;
- Facilities Management;
- Workplace Health and Well-being (the Corporate Health Standard); and
- Community Engagement.

A core purpose of the Draft Toolkit is to put Sustainable Development onto the mainstream NHS management agenda and to counteract the tendency for it to be seen as primarily an Estates function.

The Current Position

During summer 2006 the Toolkit, also entitled HEALTHY SUSTAINABLE WALES: the NHS Contribution, was piloted in four health organisations in Wales; Carmarthenshire LHB, Caerphilly LHB, North West Wales NHS Trust and North Glamorgan NHS Trust. The responses received from these pilots are now being incorporated into the Toolkit, with a view to its being published for consultation with the NHS during the period late December 2006/early January 2007 to March 2007. It is proposed that the final version will be published before the next financial year, if possible – late March 2007.

Using the Toolkit, by March 2008 all NHS organisations will be expected to adopt a clear policy statement on sustainable development and an action plan.

Financial Implications

The Toolkit is intended to advise the NHS on how to incorporate sustainable development approaches into its planning and operational activity on a routine basis. It does not require them to set up new programmes. The cost of publication of the Toolkit and web based resource will be met from existing budgets. Whilst there are no direct financial costs from this initiative, LHB and NHS Trust resources will be required to test the Toolkit and prepare the Local Action Plans and Strategies. This is a pressure on their budgets which may be mitigated by the action being undertaken as part of the development of the Health Social Care and Well-being Strategies due in 2008.

Cross Cutting Themes

The Draft Toolkit strongly supports the principle of open engagement with local partners and the wider community.

A Consultation Document – Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategies 2008-2011 – was published on the 28th November 2006. This Consultation runs until the 16th February 2007 and provides Draft Statutory Guidance and changes to Regulations for the next round of strategies in April 2008. It is proposed that the final Guidance (to be issued by the end of March 2007) will include a requirement for NHS bodies to address sustainable development through a Policy Statement and an Action Plan; the Toolkit will facilitate this.

The Draft Toolkit also supports the principles identified in the Assembly Government's Response to Beecham: Making the Connections - Delivering Beyond Boundaries: Transforming Public Services in Wales.

Additionally, the Draft Toolkit will encourage NHS Managers across the board to address Climate Change in their planning and service delivery.

Action for Subject Committee

The Committee is invited to note the paper.

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