

## **Health & Social Services Committee HSS-12-02(p.4)**

<b>Date:</b>	<b>29 May 2002</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Committee Room 3, National Assembly for Wales</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Future of the Public Health Service</b>

### **Purpose**

1. The Committee is asked to note progress on the creation of the National Public Health Service for Wales.

### **Summary**

2. The National Public Health Service for Wales will be located within a NHS Trust. It will provide the public health expertise predominantly to Local Health Boards and be structured around 3 Regional Offices. A Specialist in Public Health who will be an Executive Board member of the Local Health Board will carry responsibility for the public health of the local population.
3. The decision on which NHS Trust will host the National Public Health Service will enable agreements to be reached subsequently on a number of important organisational and managerial matters. Decisions on these matters are imminent.

### **Timing**

4. At the time of writing a decision on the selection of the host NHS Trust for the National Public Health Service is imminent. This meeting provides an opportunity to update the Health and Social Services Committee on progress to date.

### **Background**

5. On 27 November 2001 the Minister announced that a public health service for Wales would be created at a national level from April 2003 and that this would be hosted by a NHS Trust. This service will incorporate those public health functions currently undertaken by the 5 health authorities in Wales. The term "National Public Health Service" is currently being used

as a working title to describe solely the public health functions of the health authorities. It is recognised that many other bodies (such as local authorities, government agencies and the voluntary sector) have important roles in the totality of "public health" functions – these bodies will not become part of the National Public Health Service but will now work in partnership with it.

### **Decisions already taken**

6. The National Public Health Service will be located in a NHS Trust. A selection process for the host NHS Trust is currently in progress. Much of the development of the NPHS, including finalising service delivery, management and accountabilities will be done in negotiation with the Trust. The Trust will be accountable to the National Assembly for Wales for the provision of the NPHS through a Service Level Agreement.
7. The National Public Health Service will operate through 3 Regional Offices, each will have a Regional Director. At the Local Health Board a Specialist in Public Health will be designated as an Executive Director of the Board and carry responsibility for the public health of the local population.
8. The National Public Health Service will be accountable for professional and performance issues to the Chief Medical Officer, the Director of NHS Wales will be the Accounting Officer. All staff in the NHS currently undertaking public health duties will become employees of the National Public Health Service.
9. The National Public Health Service will not carry out any statutory functions, these will largely be devolved to the Local Health Boards with the national service providing them with the public health expertise and capacity to fulfil this role.
10. The current health authority responsibilities in respect of Child Protection will become a responsibility of the National Public Health Service. Work is underway to characterise and identify the resources currently deployed by health authorities in relation to Child Protection. Child Protection is an important preventive activity. It is a statutory function in partnership with local authorities. It is important to provide this service Wales-wide. Ongoing work needs to be carried out with the LHBs regarding their child protection responsibilities. A restructuring of the Child Protection services is in line with the recommendations of the Carlisle report.

### **Decisions yet to be taken**

11. Many decisions need to be arrived at in consultation with the host NHS Trust, until this has been identified consultation cannot commence. Much work has however been done in preparation for the announcement and it is hoped that early agreement can be reached in respect of the following matters:

- The National Public Health Service will operate through 3 regions. Draft job descriptions for the directors are in the course of preparation. Advertisements for the top tier of the National Public Health Service will go out in early June.
- The location of staff within the National Public Health Service is being considered. It is important to achieve a correct balance between maintaining a critical mass of staff within each region and ensuring that the service is delivered locally. Accommodation decisions will have to be taken recognising the availability within Welsh Health Estates and the requirements of other parts of the NHS.
- It is important to balance the need for business continuity with the expectations and requirements of Local Health Boards once these have been set up in shadow form. A working group is to be commissioned to address the interface and working arrangements between the Local Health Boards and the National Public Health Service. Once the host NHS Trust has been identified it is anticipated that work will start jointly between the National Assembly for Wales and the host Trust on the development of an organisational development plan for the National Public Health Service.
- Appointments to the National Public Health Service will be made through the Chief Medical Officer.
- The relationship that the National Public Health Service will have with the proposed Health Protection Agency is now being considered.
- The terms and conditions of employment for staff across the 5 health authorities are common. However there are variations in grading for some posts across the public health departments. These differences will need to be considered by the Host Trust following establishment of the National Public Health Service.

## **Financial Implication**

1. We are committed to the running costs of the restructuring exercise being overall cost-neutral. The Directors of Finance of the health authorities are validating the resources provisionally identified for those public health functions currently undertaken in Wales.

## **Further Action**

2. The Committee is asked to note this paper. A further paper will be presented to the Committee in relation to Public Health Structures at their meeting on 27 June, 2002.

**Jane Hutt**

**Minister for Health and Social Services**