

Date: Thursday 27 June 2002

Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly for Wales

Title: Public Health Service Structures

Purpose

- 1. The Committee is asked to note progress on the creation of Public Health Structures for Wales.**

Summary

- 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.
- 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.
- The Minister announced to the Health and Social Services Committee on 29 May her decision that the National Public Health Service for Wales will, from 1st April 2003, be managed by Velindre NHS Trust. In taking their new role forward the Minister emphasised to the Trust that geographical placement of staff and offices should reflect the role that the new Service will have throughout Wales.
- A number of key decisions have been awaiting the results of the selection process for the host NHS Trust as they need to be involved in the decision making process. The announcement by the Minister will allow these necessary discussions now to take place.

Decisions already taken

6. The National Public Health Service will be located in Velindre NHS Trust.
7. The Trust will be accountable to the Welsh Assembly Government for the provision of the NPHS through a Service Level Agreement.
8. The National Public Health Service will operate through 3 Regional Offices, each will have a Regional Director.
9. 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.
10. A working group has been established to consider the precise relationship between the NPHS and the LHB.
11. The National Public Health Service will be accountable for professional and performance issues to the Chief Medical Officer.
12. The Director of NHS Wales will be the Accounting Officer.
13. All staff in the NHS currently undertaking public health duties will become employees of the National Public Health Service.
14. 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.
15. The current health authority responsibilities in respect of Child Protection will become a responsibility of the National Public Health Service. A working group has been established to characterise and identify the resources currently deployed by health authorities in relation to Child Protection and to make recommendations in respect of the service.
16. The public health functions and the resources currently deployed by the 5 health authorities have been identified.

Work in Hand

17. Draft job descriptions for the directors are in the course of preparation. It is anticipated that advertisements for the top tier of the National Public Health Service will go out in June.
18. 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.
19. 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. The working group (described above) will consider these issues.
20. Although appointments to the National Public Health Service will be made by the host Trust work is required to make explicit the role that the National Assembly for Wales will have in the process.
21. The relationship that the National Public Health Service will have with the proposed Health

Protection Agency in England has yet to be finally determined following a public consultation exercise. On 29 May the Minister for Health and Social Services announced that the consultation document will propose that the Health Protection Agency in England will have a role in Wales and a statutory relationship with the National Assembly. However, in order to continue to develop arrangements matched to the distinctive needs of Wales, it is proposed that there will be separate arrangements for field services in Wales.

22. In line with the Minister's previous statements, Consultants in Communicable Disease Control will become part of the National Public Health Service – Wales rather than joining the new Agency (as is proposed in England).
23. The Minister also announced her decision that the consultation document will propose that the Public Health Laboratory Service (Wales), which currently is part of the England and Wales body which will join the Agency, will become part of the National Public Health Service - Wales. This will maximise the opportunity for drawing together the specialist and field services essential to the surveillance and control of communicable diseases in Wales.
24. The Minister announced that preparations are in hand for the establishment of the Wales Centre for Health, the independent body which will provide advice on improving health in Wales. She said that there is an urgent need to establish an independent organisation to provide advice, research and training to protect and improve health in Wales. Important statutory proposals for the Centre have been published in the NHS (Wales) Bill. Until the Bill becomes law the Minister has put in place shadow arrangements using existing National Assembly powers. The shadow Centre will be located within the Velindre NHS Trust until it can be established on a statutory footing. The agreement with Velindre NHS Trust (which has been made under Section 41 of the Government of Wales Act 1998) will mean that the Trust will be responsible for establishing the Centre in shadow form. The Centre will be advised by an Advisory Panel of experts in the field of public health from health, local authority and academic fields.

Malcolm Golding

Public Health Strategy Division