

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
HEALTH SUMMIT**

Date: 27 January 2006

Subject: **Regional Bodies and the Choosing Health Implementation Plan**

Report of: Head of Policy

Recommendation

Members of the Summit are asked to identify how the NHS and regional bodies, through their roles in economic development, planning, transport and housing, can work together to ensure the implementation of the 'Choosing Health' agenda.

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This paper outlines the key features of the Government's implementation plan for Choosing Health and the implications for the regional agenda. It provides background information for the debate on how regional bodies and the NHS can work together to tackle the broader determinants of health and reduce health inequalities.

2. Background

- 2.1 In March 2005, the Government released its implementation plan for Choosing Health, its public health White Paper (November 2004). This paper reflects a significant shift in government health policy, signalling a new sense of urgency about the need to prevent illness and a new focus on personal choice and changing individual lifestyles and behaviour.
- 2.2 Choosing Health is a substantial document, covering a wide range of issues:
 - Raising awareness about the risks of ill health and providing information about what individuals can do to improve their health
 - A number of initiatives relating to children and young people, including a Public Service Agreement target to halt rising trends in child obesity, children's trusts, children's centres and locally integrated children's services, extended schools, and parental support measures

- Community-level action to improve health including the role of Local Area Agreements, measures to promote access to healthy food, sustainable transport and physical activity
- Proposals to support individual choice, including the offer of a 'stock-take' of health to be offered to individuals at key life stages
- Plans for turning the NHS into a health-improving service, including measures to improve NHS capacity to focus on prevention
- Proposals for healthier working conditions, and for encouraging the NHS and other public sectors to lead by example

3. Implications for Local and Regional Bodies

3.1 There are clear attempts to embed change in the operational processes of the NHS, as well as in other relevant organisations and relationships. Implicitly, the White Paper acknowledges the need not just to introduce new measures or pursue targets, but also to change the culture and practice of the systems that deliver them. This approach places a strong emphasis on the local dimension. The White Paper recognises that locally focused activities by a range of local organisations are essential to tackling health inequalities. Primary Care Trusts are to set local targets, informed by customised intelligence from Public Health Observatories, and the NHS is expected to work with local authorities and other organisations at that level.

3.2 The value of joint working between the NHS and local government, businesses and voluntary organisations is firmly acknowledged as essential to effective implementation of the White Paper's proposals. It sends out an unequivocal message that NHS organisations are expected to play a leading role in local partnerships for health.

3.3 At a regional level, it is recognised that Regional Development Agencies have reaped benefits from working with the NHS to achieve health and economic development objectives. This is often achieved through employment and skills development strategies. However there are other approaches available to align health interests with the plans of regional bodies. The following approaches are suggested as options for joint work between the NHS and regional bodies, to aid discussion at the meeting:

- Collaboration between SEEDA, the NHS and the private and voluntary sectors to promote a diverse supply base to aid the commissioning of services
- Further collaboration between the Assembly and NHS to ensure the planning system makes land available for community and primary care facilities and promotes healthy living
- A joint programme between the NHS and regional bodies to promote the development of policies and approaches relating to healthy lifestyles

(including access to amenities, minimised pollution, reduction of crime, healthy transportation)

- A joint programme between SEEDA and the NHS to promote healthy workplaces (such as smoke-free workplaces, use of materials, noise)
- Support for the extended use of Health Impact Assessments as an integral part of the decision-making process around new developments
- The development of programmes focussing on providing safe and affordable housing for vulnerable and socially excluded groups and to promoting education and employment as a means to reducing health inequalities
- Action to encourage joint working on workforce issues between local authorities, the NHS and private sector, facilitated by the Assembly, GOSE and SEEDA

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10 January 2006

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