

To: DHA Chief Executives
 FHSA Chief Executives
 NHS Trust Chief Executives

cc: NHS Executive Directors
 DHA, FHSA and NHS Trust Directors of Finance
 Regional Directors of Finance and Heads of Information

EL(95)61
 11 May 1995

Dear Colleague,

New NHS Number

Summary

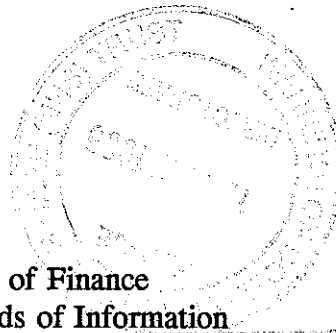
1. Issue of new format NHS numbers to babies is scheduled to start in July 1995 and the introduction of the new number into NHS systems was scheduled to follow on during 1995/96. The Executive has decided to delay the programme by 6 months in order to give priority to implementation of FHSA/GP electronic links.

Background

2. A new format NHS number is essential for unique identification of individuals for health purposes in computerised environments. Registrars of Births and Deaths were due to commence issue of new numbers from July 1995. New numbers were then to be introduced in computer systems which currently hold the old numbers during 1995/96. Introduction into FHSA systems was due in August 1995, after which they would be introduced into GP computer systems.

3. Introduction into GP systems requires prior reconciliation of FHSA and GP patient databases and the process is therefore best undertaken after GP practices have been electronically linked for patient registration purposes within the "FHSA/GP Links" programme. This programme is progressing well and the Executive wishes to ensure that FHSAs give it priority for both patient registration and items of service claims. The NHS number replacement programme would also substantially benefit if, before commencing roll-out to GP systems, more practices were linked than are currently expected by August. The Executive, therefore, does not want the NHS number replacement programme to divert attention from establishing FHSA/GP electronic links, but that it should build on them.

4. The choice of August for introducing new numbers with FHSA systems was because, at that time, business levels are relatively low. The next period of relatively low business is Christmas/New Year: hence the decision to delay by about 6 months. Details of the new schedules will be issued as soon as practicable.



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5. The Executive is conscious of the current pressures on FHSAs, particularly at a time when merger plans are being discussed with DHAs. We expect that this delay will be widely welcomed by the NHS in that, whilst not significantly affecting implementation of the NHS number replacement programme, the rescheduled timetable will allow FHSAs more time to prepare for introduction of the new number and for testing the processes by which it will be implemented.

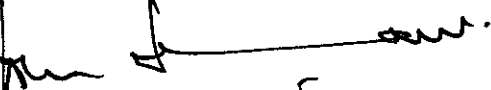
Action

6. The decision to delay the NHS number replacement programme should be disseminated appropriately. FHSAs should in particular alert GPs.

7. FHSAs should take advantage of the extended schedule for more extensive planning and testing of the processes for the NHS number changes.

8. The NHS number replacement facilitators in each region will be provided with more detailed information. Enquiries should be addressed to the Programme Manager, Ian Nicholls, Room 5W51 Quarry House, 0113 2546008.

Yours sincerely,



J F SHAW
Director of Corporate Affairs

This letter will be cancelled on 11 May 1996