

To: Chief Executives of Health Authorities
Directors of Public Health
Chief Executives of NHS Trusts

Copy: Chief Officers of Community Health Councils
Chief Executives of Local Authorities
Directors of Social Services

EL(97)46

19 September 1997



Dear Colleague

DEVELOPING EMERGENCY SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY: THE FINAL REPORT

1. The final report of a review of emergency care outside hospital led by the Chief Medical Officer, Sir Kenneth Calman, was sent to you today. This letter summarises the recommendations, outlines work already in hand and sets out areas where Health Authorities might wish to consider action.
2. This review is very much part of the Department's medium to long term strategy for emergency services. It has important links with the more immediate work with the regions to deal with winter pressures overseen by the Emergency Services Action Team, to improve Intensive Care provision and manage emergency admissions. The message is clear that we need to adopt a whole systems approach to the emergency care services and continue to improve coordination between primary, community and hospital sectors.
3. The CMO's review came to many detailed conclusions which were published last November in the consultation document 'Developing Emergency Services in the Community: Volume 1 -Emerging Conclusions' (available from the NHS Response Line 0541-555-455). These, and the responses to consultation, remain the basis of this final report. They cover the three main areas for action:

- **to coordinate** the provision of emergency care so that a well-planned and well managed system of appropriate assistance is accessible to patients 24 hours a day

- **to educate** the public so that people can recognise emergencies, deal with them and know where to return to for professional help
- **to improve access** by providing help and advice for people in emergencies through a telephone helpline.

Priority Areas

4. The final report prioritises six areas
 - to pilot and evaluate emergency telephone helplines
 - to map emergency services in the community
 - to conduct research into how people react to and handle emergencies
 - to agree and publicise the key emergency care message
 - to define a core curriculum for First Aid training
 - to modernise and standardise First Aid kits

The Department of Health is taking forward work on these priority recommendations with other agencies including other Government Departments and Agencies, the Voluntary Aid Societies and Industry. In particular the Department is piloting and evaluating telephone helplines.

5. **Health Authorities are asked in particular to review local emergency services in the light of this report.** This should involve the responsible officers mapping emergency services in each community to ensure they are comprehensive, geared to patients' needs, avoid gaps and overlaps and quantify as accurately as possible their use (Para 16). The Report recommends that Directors of Public Health might oversee this work and that it should be addressed in the annual reports of Chief Executives.

6. Health Authorities might also consider:
 - communicating positive emergency care messages to local people (Para 18)
 - encouraging the provision of training in First Aid by employers (including the NHS), schools and other organisations (Para 22)

Pilot telephone helplines

7. The review concluded that there was a very strong case for improving access to help and advice for the public in emergencies where people may not need the services of the 999 ambulance, A&E departments or their General Practitioner. We aim to establish pilot telephone helplines later this month which should be operational early 1998. These will be subject to independent evaluation to see if they are effective, and whether a new national service should be put in place. This evaluation will be published in due course and will influence decisions on further service development.

Contacts

8. For further information contact Paul Webbewood at the Department of Health, Wellington House, Waterloo Road, London, SE1 8UG (0171-972-4843)

9. Further copies of this EL may be obtained by writing to:

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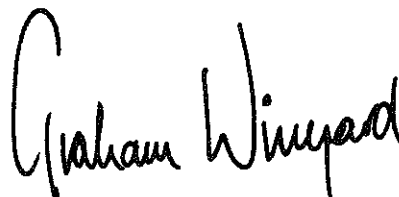
Further copies of the report are available through NHS responseline
0541-555455

10. This EL will be cancelled on 30 September 1998.



SIR KENNETH CALMAN

Chief Medical Officer



DR GRAHAM WINYARD

Medical Director NHS Executive