

# Health Service Circular



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*sets out a specific action on the part of the recipient with a deadline where appropriate*

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## Improving Quality and Performance in the New NHS

### *NHS Performance Indicators*

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For action by: Health Authorities (England)- Chairman  
Health Authorities (England) - Chief Executive  
Health Authorities (England) – Directors of Nursing  
NHS Trusts - Chairman  
NHS Trusts - Chief Executives  
Health Authorities (England) - Directors of Public Health  
Primary Care Groups and Trusts - Chairmen  
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NHS Trusts - Medical Directors  
NHS Trusts - Nurse Executives

For information to: Community Health Councils, Chief Officers  
Social Services Directors - England  
UK CNOs  
Consumer Groups  
Patient Representative Groups  
National Institute of Clinical Excellence  
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# Improving Quality and Performance in the New NHS

## *NHS Performance Indicators*

### Summary

In July 1998 *A First Class Service: Quality in the New NHS* outlined a three part approach to improving quality – new national standards; dependable local delivery systems; and improved monitoring and performance assessment. This circular is concerned with the third part and accompanies the second set of NHS Performance Indicators to be published (replacing HSC 1999/139, dated 16 June 1999). This indicator set updates, expands and brings together in one document the High Level Performance Indicators (HLPs) and the Clinical Indicators (CIs) to support the implementation of the NHS Performance Assessment Framework (PAF). The HLPs and CIs provide useful information about the quality, efficiency and outcomes of NHS services to enable Health Authorities, Primary Care Groups and NHS Trusts, working with local partner agencies, to monitor, improve and report locally their performance so that patients across England have access to the same high standards of care.

### Action

Health Authorities, Primary Care Groups/Trusts and NHS Trusts should work together with local partner agencies to use the information contained in the indicators sets to:

- review the performance of local services across the six areas of performance set out in the Performance Assessment Framework;

- compare local performance with that of other Health Authorities and NHS Trusts across the six areas of the framework and identify areas for improvement;

- share information about achieving good results for patients with other NHS organisations and to take forward work on benchmarking;

- assist work in taking forward Clinical Governance to fulfil the duty of quality;

- strengthen the emphasis on quality and outcomes in local Health Improvement Programmes and local service and accountability agreements;

- involve the users of local health services by incorporating the indicators in existing arrangements for public accountability and to provide information about the performance of local health services to patients and the public;

- secure improvements in the quality and accuracy of data collected routinely within the NHS.

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## Background & Other Information

The Performance Assessment Framework published in April 1999 under cover of HSC 1999/78, introduced a new broader-based approach to assessing performance in the NHS, focused on the things that matter most to patients and the public: the quality of services as well as the efficiency of service delivery. The six areas covered by the PAF are:

improving people's health,  
fair access to services,  
delivering effective healthcare,  
efficiency,  
the experiences of patients and their carers,  
health outcomes.

The baseline data for the Personal Social Services PAF indicator set was published on 24 November 1999 under cover of LASSL(99)24. The PSS framework is being used as part of the work being carried out by SSI Regional Offices to monitor progress towards delivering the Government's agenda set out in the White Paper *Modernising Social Services*. Three "interface" indicators are common to both NHS and PSS and will continue to support joint performance assessment by the NHS and Social Services.

## The development of the Indicators

Consultation was undertaken by the NHS Executive in 1997/98 on the HLPs and CIs. Since then work has been ongoing in partnership with the clinical professions and NHS managers to develop the indicator sets. The current set now numbers 49 indicators, including 7 clinically based indicators shown at trust level. It has been expanded to include indicators linked to the National Service Frameworks, indicators relevant to primary care and indicators based on the results of the National Survey of NHS Patients.

The aim in publishing the indicators is to ensure that, where there are large and unexplained variations in performance, every effort is made to find out why, and work is put in train to bring about an early improvement. The quality of data used in these indicators has improved since last year's publication, and the contribution of the NHS in this respect is gratefully acknowledged. Consistently high quality of data is a key aim of the Government's information strategy for the NHS, *Information for Health*, (published in 1998). This will take time, but this second publication of NHS Performance Indicators will continue to send the signal to the service that data quality is important and where necessary, steps should be taken to improve it.

A third set of NHS Performance Indicators will be published this winter, as a result of improved timeliness in the availability of data, and will be followed thereafter by annual winter publications.

## Associated Documentation

The indicators are published in *Quality and Performance in the NHS: NHS Performance Indicators*.

This publication is also available on the Department of Health's web site at

<http://www.doh.gov.uk/nhsperformanceindicators>

*This Circular has been issued by:*

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