

Health Service Circular

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LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS FOR HOSPITAL DOCTORS IN TRAINING

For action by: NHS Regional Directors
Health Authorities (England) - Chief Executives
NHS Trusts - Chief Executives
NHS Trusts - Human Resources Directors
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It is also available on the Department of Health web site at
<http://www.doh.gov.uk/coinh.htm>

LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS FOR HOSPITAL DOCTORS IN TRAINING

Summary

Guidance has been agreed for the NHS on introducing new standards on living and working conditions for hospital doctors in training, including new inspection, monitoring and enforcement arrangements.

Background

The guidance is the result of detailed negotiations and discussions with junior doctors' representatives, regional New Deal task force officers, representatives from postgraduate deaneries, NHS managers, NHS Estates staff and other interested parties. It sets out standards for accommodation and catering. It also sets out the steps to be taken where these standards are not met, and includes case studies and examples of good practice.

It aims to contribute directly to achieving one of the three strategic aims of *Working Together*, the NHS human resources framework: "Be able to demonstrate we are improving the quality of working life for staff". "Working Together" highlights acceptable catering and accommodation for on-call staff as a minimum target for all NHS employers to achieve. Meeting this target is, in turn, an element in achieving the "Improving Working Lives" standard against which Trusts' performance will be managed. The NHS Plan further emphasises the importance to staff to be able to work in a well-managed training environment.

Funding

Of the £10 million available in 2000/2001 to support implementation of the junior doctors' New Deal, £5 million has been allocated to Health Authorities to assist in the salary costs of the junior doctors' new contract, and £5 million has been used for initiatives by the existing regional taskforces, including improvements in junior doctors' facilities. This £5 million will also be available in 2001/2002 to support the work of the Taskforce successor bodies. In addition, every NHS Trust is receiving £25,000 this year to spend on improving the working environment for staff as part of the wider "Improving Working lives" initiative. Juniors should now be beginning to reap the local benefits of this spending.

A further £2 million for expenditure on capital projects, for example accommodation improvements and equipment, will be made available in 2001/2002. Details of this funding were announced in HSC 2000/035, *HCHS Capital Allocations*.

Action

Regional Directors should

- Ensure that facilities monitoring/inspection arrangements are in place in their Region, as outlined in Annex B of the guidance
- Ensure that Trust performance against the standards in Annex A is monitored and managed, and that Trusts are supported in working towards better standards
- Ensure that the performance management of these standards feeds into the *Improving Working Lives* accreditation process.

NHS Trusts should

- Involve and consult staff and other key users, including junior doctors, whenever new building, refurbishment, or other proposals affecting their working and living conditions are under consideration
- Set up local “New Deal” implementation groups in which junior doctor representatives and Trust managers can discuss and address issues of concern about junior doctors’ hours, living and working conditions
- Introduce a local maintenance service level agreement agreed by the local implementation group and/or the Local Negotiating Committee (see annex C)
- Provide up to date information to new employees, including junior doctors, explaining what facilities are available and how to access them
- Designate a named Trust officer to whom staff and users can address complaints and concerns about facilities
- Check Trust facilities regularly to ensure that minimum standards are reached and maintained, and take remedial action where necessary
- Work with Regional Offices, postgraduate deans, junior doctors and other relevant interest groups towards full compliance with the standards outlined in Annex A.

Postgraduate Deans should

- Satisfy themselves that Trusts are providing a supportive environment, including adequate living and working conditions, for doctors in training
- Where Annex A standards are not met, take enforcement action as set out in Annex B.

Junior doctors should

- Take care of hospital accommodation and equipment

- Through their representatives, involve themselves in discussions on local proposals affecting their working and living conditions
- Report concerns about facilities to the designated Trust contact point, so that defects can be remedied as soon as possible.

Access to the guidance

Copies of the guidance are available electronically on the Department of Health Website: www.doh.gov.uk/juniordoctors, or alternatively on the NHS HR Website: www.doh.nhsweb.nhs.uk/nhs/hr/juniordoctors.htm.

This Circular has been issued by:

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