



Chief Executives, HSS Boards
Chief Executives, HSS Trusts
Chief Executive, CSA
Chief Executives, HSS Special Agencies
Chief Officers, HSS Councils (for information)

Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast BT4 3SQ
Tel: 028 9052 2902
Fax: 028 9052 3206
Email:
john.allen2@dhsspsni.gov.uk

Your Ref:
Our Ref: HSS(PPM) 8/2004

Date: 5 August 2004

Dear Colleague

GOVERNANCE IN THE HPSS: CONTROLS ASSURANCE STANDARDS – UPDATE

1. Some of you may have seen Monday's announcement by Sir Nigel Crisp that the existing NHS controls assurance regime has been scrapped, as of 1st August. This follows on the recent launch of the NHS *Health & Social Care Standards and Planning Framework*, which signified a move away from a centralized system of national targets to one of continuous quality improvement driven by mandatory standards.
2. It was in the broader context of this new standards-oriented approach that the NHS Chief Executive made his announcement on controls assurance. The basic justification for change is that the risk management principles initially enshrined in the 22 NHS standards have now been firmly embedded in Trusts' management processes, which themselves are subject to verification (by the Healthcare Commission and the Commission for Social Care Inspection) against explicit standards.
3. While the new approach in England is of clear relevance to the HPSS, there is no immediate read-across. There are two reasons for that:

the NHS has had four years' experience of the portfolio of controls assurance standards: the HPSS has yet to roll out its full range of standards, and so the system cannot be said to have embedded itself; and

England has an existing (and, from April 2005, a fully comprehensive) performance framework for the NHS and social care within which controls assurance issues can be systematically addressed. There is, as yet, no HPSS equivalent.

4. The current HPSS controls assurance programme will, therefore, continue as planned - with one detailed exception. The draft Professional Advice & Services standard contains flaws that were acknowledged by the NHS Executive. It has already been withdrawn by the NHS in Wales and, in light of the developments in England, the Department does not now intend to introduce the standard for the HPSS.
5. Any queries on the content of this circular should be addressed in the first instance to Robert Haworth, Planning and Priorities Unit, tel: 028 9052 8286, e-mail robert.haworth@dhsspsni.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

JRB ALLEN
PLANNING & PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT DIRECTORATE