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Your Ref:

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

GOVERNANCE IN THE HPSS: REPORTING ON COMPLIANCE WITH CONTROLS ASSURANCE STANDARDS FOR 2003/04

1. The purpose of this circular is to set out the requirements for HPSS organisations to report on their compliance with controls assurance standards issued for 2003/04.

Controls Assurance Standards

2. Circular HSS (PPM) 5/2003 formally launched an initial six HPSS controls assurance standards, covering the core standards of governance, financial management and risk management, with three additional standards of human resources, medical equipment and devices, and medicines management. The circular also advised HPSS bodies that they would be required to assess and report their levels of compliance with the standards on an annual basis, in support of the wider Statement on Internal Control (SIC).

Self-Assessment

3. Guidance on applicability, expected levels of compliance and the assessment process may be accessed through the governance website: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hss/governance/index.asp. The underlying principle is that the assessment of compliance is based only on the aspects of a standard that apply to a particular organisation. Where standards, or criteria within standards, do not apply, this should be clearly stated in the assessment and supported by comment.

Timetable and Reporting Mechanisms

4. In support of their Accountable Officers' SIC, individual organisations will have already begun the self-assessment process for 2003/04 compliance. To meet the timetable for the Accounting Officer's SIC in the Departmental Resource Accounts, formal self-assessment returns for the 2003/04 year must be made by 28 May 2004.
5. Returns in respect of the six extant controls assurance standards should be made and submitted electronically on a spreadsheet, which will also be available on the governance website. A single hard copy, endorsed by the Chief Executive, should also be forwarded to Robert Haworth at the above address. The Department will notify HPSS bodies by e-mail when the spreadsheet becomes available for use.
6. If you have any queries about the content of this circular, please contact Elaine Lawson on 028 90523112.

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