



THE SCOTTISH OFFICE

National Health Service in Scotland  
Management Executive

NHS  
MEL(1993)119

St. Andrew's House  
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

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Dear Colleague

MANAGEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH  
SERVICES FOR HEALTHCARE STAFF

**Summary**

1. This letter commends guidance published recently by the Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) of the Health and Safety Commission on "The management of occupational health services for healthcare staff".

**Action**

- 2. Health Boards/Trusts are asked to:
  - note the new guidance and take any appropriate action;
  - copy this letter to Unit General Managers for information.
- 3. Details relating to the booklet are given in the attached Annex.

Yours sincerely

A J MATHESON  
Director of Manpower

3 September 1993

For action:

General Managers,  
Health Boards

General Manager,  
Common Services Agency

Chief Executives,  
NHS Trusts

For information:

General Manager,  
State Hospital

General Manager,  
Health Education Board  
for Scotland

Enquiries to:

Mr J Hannah  
Directorate of  
Manpower  
NHS Management  
Executive Room 63 St  
Andrew's House  
EDINBURGH EH1 3DG  
Tel: 031 244 2478  
Fax: 031-244 2683

## THE MANAGEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR HEALTHCARE STAFF

1. The Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) of the Health and Safety Commission (HSC) have updated an earlier HSAC publication of 1984 to incorporate new guidelines on record-keeping and the confidentiality of occupational health records. Copies of the new booklet were issued on 17 June 1993 by the HSAC to all NHS employing authorities. The guidance provides the specialist advice which is referred to in the General Whitley Council agreement notified to Health Boards and Trusts by NHS Circular PCS(GC)1993/2 on 29 June 1993; the new agreement is aimed at ensuring that "Health at Work" strategies are effective.
2. The HSAC is anxious that the updated guidance should reach all those who are responsible for providing occupational health services for NHS staff. Accordingly in commending the guidance to NHS employing authorities, it is recommended that copies should be made available to all staff in occupational health departments. Employing authorities are also asked to review their occupational health service policies and procedures in the light of the guidance and, in particular, their existing systems for record-keeping. A copy of the HSC news release associated with the publication is enclosed for information.
3. Further copies of the guidance booklet (price £4.50 net) may be obtained from HMSO Publications Centre, PO Box 276, London SW1H 5DT or from HMSO bookshops and accredited agents (Ref: ISBN 0 11 882127 X).
4. Any feedback on the implementation of the guidance should be sent to:

Elizabeth Gyngell  
Chairperson  
HSAC  
Secretariat: Health and Safety Executive  
InterCity House  
Mitchell Lane  
BRISTOL  
B51 6AN  
Tel: 0272 2906812  
Fax: 0272 262998

and copied to Mr J Hannah at the Management Executive at the address shown on page 1.



# Health & Safety Commission

NEWS RELEASE ... NEWS RELEASE ... NEWS RELEASE ... NEWS RELEASE ... NEWS RELEASE ...

SW/11/93

16 June 1993

## NEW GUIDANCE ON MANAGING OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR HEALTHCARE STAFF

New guidance for health services managers on the provision of occupational health services for their staff is published today by the Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) of the Health and Safety Commission (HSC).

Launching the guidance at a Bournemouth conference today, Elizabeth Gygell, who chairs the HSAC, said:

"This new guidance points out that employees in the health services may be exposed at work to a number of hazards which are known to cause illness. These include respiratory sensitisers, ionising radiations, infections, stress, and back injury associated with manual handling.

"Occupational health services have an important role in the healthcare sector in providing pre-employment health screening and health surveillance for persons who may be exposed to such hazards in the course of their work. An occupational health service can also be involved in establishing preventive health programmes and in providing health education to health services employees."

She added: "The new guidance, which updates and replaces an earlier HSAC publication, is intended mainly as an aid to health services managers who may need to review an existing occupational health service or to set one up."

The document includes a description of the difference between the transferable and confidential information components of occupational health records, and provides guidance on the restriction of access to confidential clinical information.

It also addresses the need for occupational health records to be retained for a number of years in accordance with the requirements of recent health and safety legislation.

Employers are advised in the document to ensure that occupational health services are staffed by suitably qualified personnel.

Copies of the new guidance - "The Management of Occupational Health Services for Healthcare Staff" (ISBN 0-11-882127-X) - are available, price £4.50, from HMSO and through booksellers.

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#### NOTES TO NEWS EDITOR

1. HSAC is one of the HSC's industry/employment sector advisory committees appointed to encourage the participation of employers and employees in the improvement of health and safety at work and to draw on all the expertise and advice that is available. Membership is divided equally between employer representatives drawn proportionately from the National Health Service and the private sector, and employee representatives drawn from the trade unions concerned.

2. The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires employers to ensure - so far as is reasonably practicable - the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees. The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 (COSHH) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 impose duties on employers to provide health surveillance for their employees under certain specified circumstances.

3. The new document was launched today at the annual conference in Bournemouth of NAHAT, the Association of NHS Authorities and Trusts.

4. The HSAC document replaced by the new publication is "Guidelines on Occupational Health Services in the Health Service" published in 1984.

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE HEALTH & SAFETY COMMISSION BY COI SOUTH WEST, THE PITHAY, BRISTOL BS1 2NF. MEDIA ENQUIRIES TO PETER WHITBREAD OR CHRIS LAWRENCE ON BRISTOL (0272) 45-6867/45-6865 (DIRECT LINE) OR (0272) 273767.