



THE SCOTTISH OFFICE

NHS  
MEL (1995)7

National Health Service in Scotland  
Management Executive

St. Andrew's House  
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

NSD  
BTS

Dear Colleague

**SCOTTISH NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME**

**Background**

1. The Scottish Needs Assessment Programme originated in 1991 as a "self-help" group of Consultants in Public Health Medicine to undertake the production of needs assessment, develop methodology and share their findings across Scotland. Between 1992 and 1994 the programme supported research on the methodology of needs assessment and funding was supplied for a central co-ordinating office through a research grant from the Chief Scientist Office. Since 1993, SNAP has worked closely with the Joint Working Group on Purchasing and has agreed a work programme with the Joint Working Group on Purchasing.

**SNAP Stocktake**

2. The programme and Health Boards have produced a growing library of needs assessments and in May 1994 consultants in Public Health Medicine collectively reviewed progress in Scotland and south of the border. The findings of this stocktaking exercise are summarised in the attached report.

**Resources**

3. SNAP's prime resource lies in the abilities and skills of the consultants in Public Health Medicine who undertake the production of reports. The financial support which SNAP receives comes from an amalgam of sources. The Forum for Public Health Medicine partly supports the central office of SNAP; SNAP's research activities have been funded by a grant from CSO; and funds have been made available by the Management Executive to cover the cost of publication of reports and economic input. Now that the initial research grant is due to end, the Joint Working Group on Purchasing and Chief Scientist Office have reviewed the future funding of SNAP. They have concluded that, because purchasers clearly value the output of the SNAP programme, it should continue. They also would like to see further research undertaken into the impact of needs assessment on purchasing; and methodologies for developing economic input into need assessment.

31 January 1995

**Addressees:**

For action:  
General Managers,  
Health Boards

For Information:  
General Manager, State  
Hospital

General Manager,  
Common Services Agency

General Manager,  
Health Education Board  
for Scotland

Chief Executives and  
Chief Executives  
Designate NHS Trusts

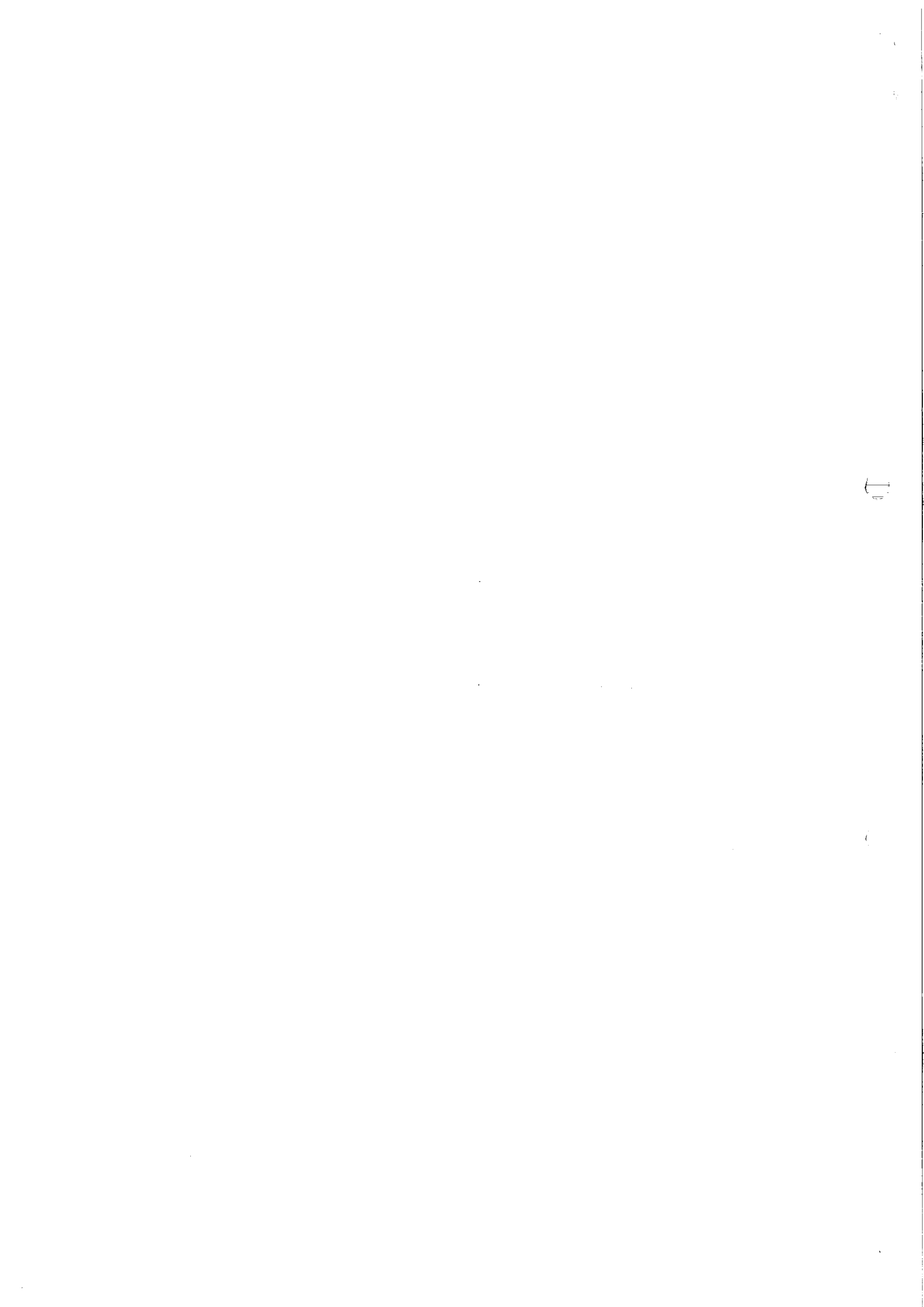
To be copied to Unit  
General Managers and  
GPs for information

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4. The Management Executive has now agreed to make a major contribution, through top sliced funds, to the cost of SNAP's central office and the costs of publication and dissemination of reports.

5. Reports will only continue to be produced, however, if the time of consultants in Public Health Medicine is made available. General Managers should be aware, therefore, of the need to support SNAP's activities by specifically ensuring that public health staff within their organisations are given sufficient time to devote to SNAP's requirements.

#### **Work Programme**

6. As purchasing in Scotland continues to develop it is becoming clear that a wide range of work is now underway in a variety of fora to support purchasers in their new role. There would be substantial benefit in co-ordinating work not just on needs assessment, but on the wide range of initiatives aimed at improving clinical effectiveness. In recognition of this a consultative document is being developed on the respective roles and relationships of the many bodies involved in this area at a national level; and on a proposed "core work programme" for these groups which include SNAP. But in the meantime while proposals are being developed, there is a need for SNAP to plan its work programme for 1995/96. The Joint Working Group on Purchasing has therefore been asked to agree a "core" work programme with SNAP which takes into account work in hand elsewhere. A timetable for the production of reports, in accordance with national priorities identified by the Joint Working Group on Purchasing, will be circulated in the Spring.

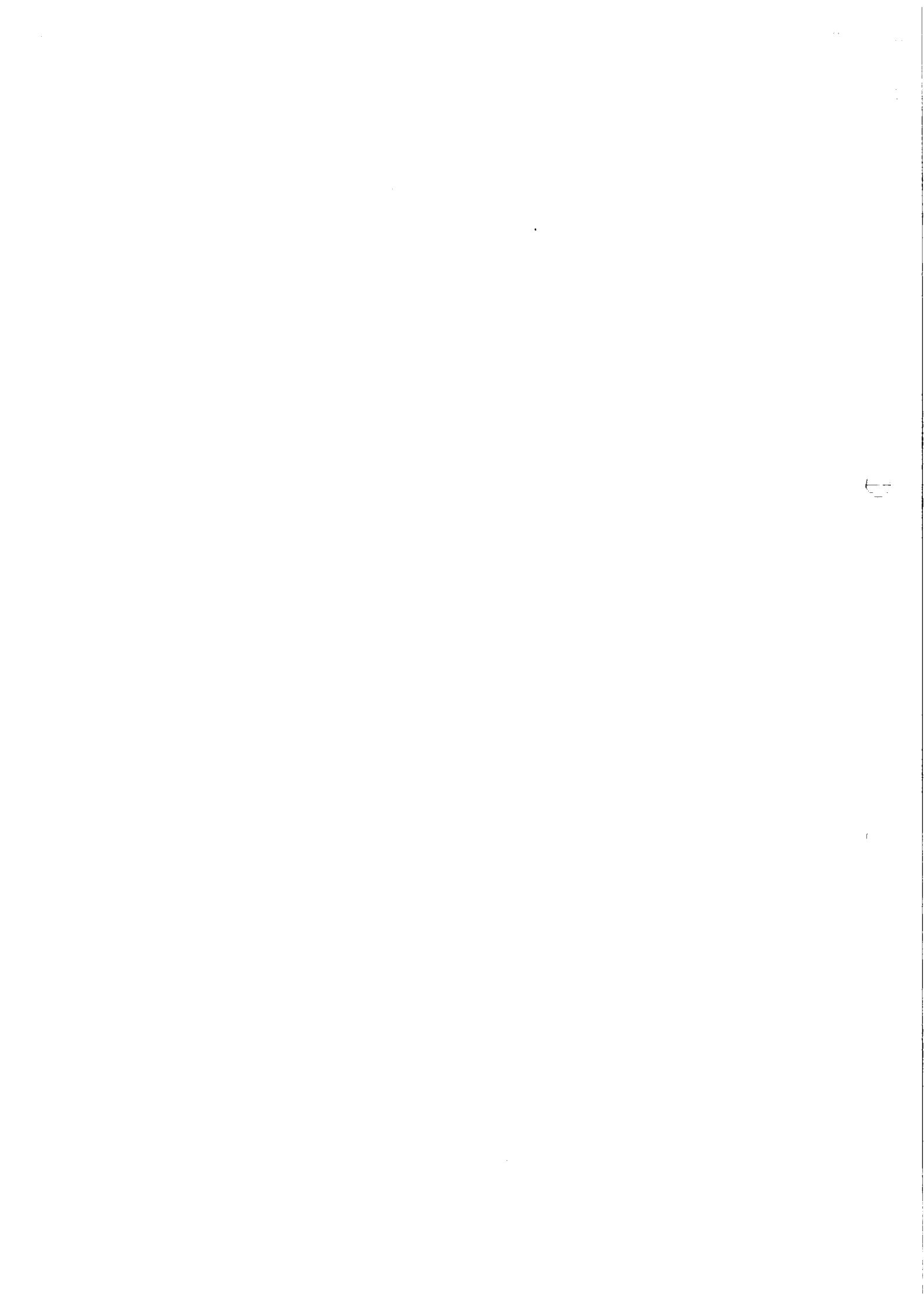
#### **Publication**

7. These new arrangements recognise the contribution SNAP is making to delivering the purchasing agenda in Scotland. SNAP however, in keeping with its ongoing role as a self-help group of consultants in Public Health Medicine, will also continue to publish material which is not governed by the requirements of the national agenda and which will be independently disseminated by SNAP, as appropriate, under the aegis of the Forum for Public Health Medicine. In future, reports which form part of the "core work programme" will be considered in draft by the JWG on Purchasing, before publication. This will allow the key recommendations for purchasers contained in each report to be highlighted. To ensure SNAP's findings reach the widest possible audience, dissemination will take place under cover of an MEL signed jointly by the Chief Executive, NHS in Scotland and the Chief Medical Officer.

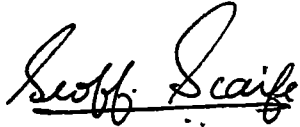
#### **Dissemination**

8. The SNAP reports which come to the JWG on Purchasing will be distributed to all Health Board General Managers, Directors of Public Health, Trust Chief Executives and Associations of GP Fundholders. In addition each GP practice will receive a copy of the Executive Summary of each SNAP report, with an invitation to obtain a copy of the full report from the local Health Board.

9. The existing library of SNAP reports is commended to purchasers and providers as a useful library of information on which the service may draw and one which will be further enhanced by reports currently in the pipeline. Future stocktakes will take place with the aim of keeping SNAP reports already in circulation up-to-date and to ensure that purchasers



and providers are kept informed of the full range of SNAP publications. SNAP provides a useful resource to purchasers and providers. These new arrangements are designed to ensure that the public health expertise which the reports represent may be as widely disseminated and applied as possible.



GEOFF SCAIFE  
Chief Executive  
NHS in Scotland



ROBERT KENDELL  
Chief Medical Officer

