



Department of Health

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NHS Management Executive  
St. Andrew's House  
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

9<sup>th</sup> June 1999

Dear Colleague

**THE NHS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE: REVISED  
GUIDANCE FOR FAMILY HEALTH SERVICE,  
HOSPITAL AND HEALTH BOARD COMPLAINTS**

**Summary**

Attached to this Management Executive Letter are copies of the final revised Guidance for those operating the NHS Complaints Procedure. This Guidance refines and expands on the earlier advice issued under MEL(1996)24 in the light of comments received. The Guidance complements and supports the legal framework of the procedure, contained in the Directions which are being revised separately and will issue later in the year.

**Background**

The NHS Complaints Procedure was introduced on 1 April 1996. Following an extensive consultation exercise, the Guidance has been revised to take into account the new functions of Primary Care Trusts and omissions and clarifications from the original Guidance such as the role of the Mental Welfare Commission. You will also see that the Guidance has been divided into 3 documents dealing separately with Family Health Service, Hospital and Health Board complaints.

**Action**

Health Board General Managers, NHS Trust Chief Executives, Health Council Chief Officers and Complaints Officers are asked to ensure that the Guidance is brought to the attention of all staff involved in the complaints process.

**Addressees**

For action:

Health Board General Managers  
NHS Trust Chief Executives  
Local Health Council Chief Officers  
Special Health Board General Managers  
Health Board Complaints Officers  
NHS Trust Complaints Officers

For information:

Local Health Care Co-operatives  
Health Service Commissioner for Scotland  
Scottish Association for Health Councils  
Mental Welfare Commission  
Scottish Medical and Dental Defence Union  
Scottish Council for Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education  
Scottish Committee of Optometrists  
Royal College of General Practitioners  
Scottish Secretary, British Medical Association  
National Pharmaceutical Advisory Group

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## **Other Information**

1. Please note that further amendments to the guidance will be issued on the Scottish Health on the Web (SHOW) <http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk/> and you will be informed of those as they arise. Extra copies of the guidance can be obtained from this website.
2. You are also asked to note that 2 training seminars are to be held on 27 May in Edinburgh and 3 June in Glasgow. Details have been sent to all Health Boards, NHS Trusts and Health Councils.
3. You are reminded that Health Boards will remain responsible for handling Family Health Services complaints until the NHS Bill receives Royal Assent. Interim guidance was issued by Primary Care Directorate on 29 January 1999.

Yours sincerely



**KEVIN J WOODS**  
Director of Strategy and Performance Management