



To: Strategic Health Authority Chief Executives

cc: Strategic Health Authority Directors of Performance  
Directors of Social Services  
Monitor  
NHS Operational Board

Gateway Ref: 14832

23 September 2010

Dear Colleague

**Preparations for winter planning and reporting 2010/11**

I am writing to emphasise the importance of robust, effective and timely preparation for winter and to outline this year's process for winter reporting.

In order that we continue to provide high quality, timely care throughout this period, I would ask that you ensure all your local health economies are well prepared for winter.

Due to the efforts of all NHS organisations in recent years and more recently with our work on pandemic flu last year, we are collectively well prepared to deal with the additional pressures winter can bring with it.

As we discussed with SHA Directors of Performance at our September meeting, our joint expectation is of a whole system approach to managing winter, seasonal flu and other pressures across each SHA area and across the NHS and social care system more generally this winter, not least in the context of QIPP and the new White Paper, which presents us with new challenges.

David Nicholson wrote to the NHS on 10 September 2010 to reiterate the important message about responding to such challenges.

Specifically he has said that the key task for us all is to deliver high quality care within the resources available. These will also be challenging times for the whole system as we seek unprecedented quality and productivity improvements so it is vital we continue to focus on delivery, particularly as winter approaches.

## Winter planning

Essentially, the same eight areas as previous years need to be addressed and preparation assured as part of your winter planning arrangements.

Effectively managed, this should once again help ensure that all services across local health and social care systems are well coordinated and well placed to respond appropriately to the demands of winter:

1. Handover of patient care from ambulance to acute trust
2. Operational readiness (bed management, capacity, staffing and New Year, elective 're-start' etc)
3. Out of hours arrangements
4. NHS/Social Care joint arrangements including work with local authorities
5. Ambulance Service/Primary Care/A&E links
6. Critical care services
7. Preventative measures, including flu campaigns and pneumococcal immunisation programmes
8. Communications

## Patient handovers between ambulance services and acute trusts

Patient handover has been a significant issue in recent years. We expect SHAs to take a lead role again this year in ensuring that continued improvements happen and do not compromise patient experience.

## Seasonal flu immunisation programme 2010/11

There has been excellent progress over recent years towards the World Health Organisation target of 75% uptake in those aged 65 years and over and we would encourage continuation of this. Additionally, it is important for us to work towards improving the uptake in the under 65 clinical "at risk" groups to the same levels seen in older people (full details can be found in this year's CMO letter below).

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Lettersandcirculars/Professionalletters/Chiefmedicalofficerletters/DH\\_116507](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Lettersandcirculars/Professionalletters/Chiefmedicalofficerletters/DH_116507)

## Winter reporting arrangements

We will continue to use UNIFY2 for reporting local winter pressures, using the daily SITREP. Daily SITREP reporting will commence from **Tuesday 2 November 2010** and we will review reporting requirements at the end of **February 2011**.

For the Christmas period, it is intended that information covering 8am 24 December 2010 until 8am 30 December 2010 will be submitted in a SITREP on 30 December 2010. There will be no SITREP on 3 January 2011, the New Year bank holiday. The SITREP on 4 January 2011 will cover the period from 8 am 31 December 2010 to 8am on 4 January 2011.

Please note that although daily SITREPs via UNIFY2 are only required on working days, serious operational problems, which occur on non-working days, should be reported by trusts to their relevant SHA contact by 11am of the following day so any information can be fed into daily reporting arrangements.

### **SITREP reporting**

With the support of PIRG colleagues and Directors of Performance, we have redesigned the daily SITREP and supporting guidance to complete it (copies of both documents are available on UNIFY2).

As you will appreciate, the quality and timing of daily SITREPs is very important.

Each SHA is required to sign off a daily (Monday to Friday) SITREP which is compiled from submission by individual trusts.

Monday's SITREP covers a period from 8am Friday morning to 8am Monday morning. Trusts are required to submit their return by 11am each day and SHAs are expected to sign off these reports no later than 12pm each day. Since reporting began, most trusts and SHAs have reported to time with what are only minor delays.

We would encourage you and your respective organisations to ensure reports are submitted on time to allow the production of a daily Departmental operational report, which is used to gauge both the national and individual regional health economy position for operational problems, including actions at local level to mitigate any risks as a result of those pressures.

### **NHS Foundation Trusts**

Following discussions with Monitor, it has been agreed that for NHS Foundation Trusts, (NHS FTs) last year's arrangements for completing daily SITREPs will continue this year.

If problems are reported to the commissioning PCT, the PCT will pick up any issues of concern with the FT directly and make comments in the free text box on the daily SITREP regarding the FT as necessary.

Please could you confirm the main A&E commissioning PCTs for FTs to the dedicated mailbox for winter 2010/11 [winter@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:winter@dh.gsi.gov.uk) as soon as possible and no later than **15 October 2010**.

If you have any technical queries specifically about the return please contact Michael Barnes [michael.barnes@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:michael.barnes@dh.gsi.gov.uk) or Clive Seaman [clive.seaman@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:clive.seaman@dh.gsi.gov.uk)

DH's NHS Operations Unit will again lead with the NHS about winter. From 2 November 2010, early notice of problems can be given during office hours to the SHA's normal contact in NHSBU or via the winter mailbox ([winter@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:winter@dh.gsi.gov.uk)).

As with last year, DH will be making individual phone calls to the SHAs who have flagged significant problems in their daily SITREP return.

This approach means each SHA will be asked to provide a daily contact (with a secondary back-up number), which can be used should we need to contact them after the 12pm submission of SITREPs.

Please arrange for this information to be sent to [winter@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:winter@dh.gsi.gov.uk) by **15 October 2010** along with the name and contact details of the Director within the SHA who will act as your winter lead.

### **Escalation**

Like last year, we may instigate weekly telephone conferences with SHAs where there is a pressing need to understand more about serious operational problems.

These discussions will not substitute for direct conversations with the Department and those individual SHAs where incidents or issues reported in daily SITREPs require attention.

As you will appreciate, it may be necessary for the frequency of these telephone conferences to move to a daily basis at any given time depending on the scale of pressure across the system.

I am sure you will appreciate the importance of completing effective planning ahead of this winter period to ensure robust procedures are coordinated for all your local NHS and social care services.

This letter provides the necessary advice on the issues you may have regarding preparations in managing your winter arrangements.

If you do require any further information then please do not hesitate to contact [tim.young@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:tim.young@dh.gsi.gov.uk) or [james.skelly@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:james.skelly@dh.gsi.gov.uk)

Yours sincerely



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**NHS Finance, Performance and Operations**