

Getting the most from your National Health Service



Your guide
to the NHS



The NHS Plan, which the Prime Minister launched in July 2000, describes how increased funding will be used to improve the NHS. This guide helps explain how these changes will affect you. It will take time - not least to train the extra doctors, nurses and other staff the NHS needs - but extra resources will produce better services for patients.

It sets out what you can expect from the NHS today and what you can expect in the future as improvements to health services are made.

We aim to answer the main questions you may have, and at the back of the Guide, we tell you how you can get more information about the NHS.

Your local health authority will be able to tell you more about the plans to improve health services in your area.





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Our commitment to you - we want the NHS to be a high-quality health service. These are our aims as set out in the NHS Plan.

The NHS will provide a universal service for all based on clinical need, not ability to pay.

The NHS will provide a comprehensive range of services.

The NHS will shape its services around the needs and preferences of individual patients, their families and their carers.

The NHS will respond to different needs of different populations.

The NHS will work continuously to improve quality services and to minimise errors.





The NHS will support and value its staff.

Public funds for healthcare will be devoted solely to NHS patients.

The NHS will work together with others to ensure a seamless service for patients.

The NHS will help keep people healthy and work to reduce health inequalities.

The NHS will respect the confidentiality of individual patients and provide open access to information about services, treatment and performance.



The NHS will work better if you use the service responsibly.

Do what you can to look after your own health, and follow advice on a healthy lifestyle.

Care for yourself when appropriate. (For example, you can treat yourself at home for common ailments such as coughs, colds and sore throats.)

Give blood if you are able, and carry an organ donor card or special needs card or bracelet.

Listen carefully to advice on your treatment and medication. Tell the doctor about any treatments you are already taking.

Treat NHS staff, fellow patients, carers and visitors politely, and with respect. We will not accept violence, racial, sexual or verbal harassment.





Keep your appointment or let the GP, dentist, clinic or hospital know as soon as possible if you cannot make it. Book routine appointments in plenty of time.

Return any equipment that is no longer needed.

Pay NHS prescription charges and any other charges promptly when they are due and claim financial benefits or exemptions from these charges correctly.

Use this Guide to help you find the services you need.



How can I stay healthy?

10 simple tips to help you stay healthy.

3

1

Don't smoke. If you need help to give up, call the NHS Smoking Helpline on **0800 169 0 169**.



2

Eat a balanced diet, and aim for at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day.



3

Aim to be physically active for a total of half an hour a day, five days a week (or an hour a day for children).



4

If you are 65 or over, you should ask for a free flu jab each autumn.



5

If you drink alcohol, do not drink too much.





6

Cover up in the sun, and protect children from sunburn.



3

7

Practise safer sex.



8

Take up cancer screening opportunities.



9

Be safe on the roads and follow the Highway Code.



10

Learn the first-aid ABC - Airways, Breathing, Circulation.



I am unwell. What can I do?

**I am unwell.
What can I do?**

Do you need advice?

Do you think you need to see someone?

Do you feel you need urgent medical treatment?

4





You can:

call NHS Direct on **0845 4647**
and speak to a nurse

use NHS Direct Online
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

use the NHS Direct Healthcare Guide
ask your local pharmacist.



You can:

call NHS Direct on **0845 4647**
and speak to a nurse

make an appointment with your
practice nurse, GP, dentist or optician
visit an NHS walk-in centre.



You can:

call NHS Direct on **0845 4647**
and speak to a nurse

contact your GP for an urgent
appointment (including advice
on urgent prescriptions)
go to your nearest accident and
emergency department or
minor injuries unit
call **999** for an ambulance.





Do you need advice?

You can:

- call the telephone helpline NHS Direct
- use NHS Direct Online
- use the NHS Direct Healthcare Guide
- ask your local pharmacist.

These services will help you treat yourself at home for common ailments like colds, coughs and sore throats.

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NHS Direct is a confidential 24-hour telephone helpline. By calling 0845 4647, you can speak to a nurse for advice at any time of the day or night wherever you are in England.



Call the telephone helpline NHS Direct

NHS Direct is a confidential 24-hour telephone helpline staffed by expert nurses. By calling **0845 4647**, you can speak to a nurse for advice at any time of the day or night, wherever you are in England. You can expect your call to be answered quickly. There will be an interpreter to provide advice in your own language, if you need this.

Use NHS Direct Online

This is an Internet site which provides information about health services, and a variety of conditions and treatment choices (such as information on conditions relating to chest, lung and heart). It also has details of major national self-help groups. Visit **www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk**

If you are not connected to the Internet, you can use NHS Direct information points. These touch-screen terminals give you free access to the information on the NHS Direct Online website. You can find them in public places such as supermarkets and pharmacies. You can phone NHS Direct on **0845 4647**, for details of your nearest NHS Direct information point.



Use the NHS Direct Healthcare Guide

The NHS Direct Healthcare Guide helps you decide when it is safe to treat yourself at home, and provides tips on what to do, such as which medicines to stock up on.

You can get a copy of the NHS Direct Healthcare Guide from your local pharmacy. It is also available on the NHS Direct Online website at **www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk**

If you are not sure what to do, phone NHS Direct on **0845 4647** and speak to a nurse for further advice.

Ask your local pharmacist

Your pharmacist will give you advice on how to deal with a range of minor illnesses (such as coughs and colds) and advise you on what medicines you could take to help you. Or, they can tell you when it might be better to see your GP. You may ask for your pharmacist's advice even if you don't buy anything. The pharmacist may ask questions to check that the medicine is safe for you to use and that it will not react with medicines you are already taking. If you are already taking any medicines, you should always tell your pharmacist before you buy new medicines.



What improvements can you expect in the future?

NHS Direct will include extra services including reminders about appointments, and they will check up on your care after you have left hospital.

We will also provide more information about health and health services through a variety of electronic channels such as digital TV.





Do you need to see someone?

For a problem you feel is not urgent, you can:

- call the telephone helpline NHS Direct.

If you need to make an appointment, you should:

- contact your practice nurse or GP
- contact your dentist
- contact your optician.

Or, visit an NHS walk-in centre.



NHS Direct is a confidential 24-hour telephone helpline. By calling 0845 4647, you can speak to a nurse for advice at any time of the day or night wherever you are in England.



Call the telephone helpline NHS Direct

NHS Direct can provide information about health, illness and health services. Specially trained nurses can advise you whether you should treat yourself at home, speak to your pharmacist, or GP practice, dentist, optician, visit a walk-in centre or go to hospital.

If you are not registered with a GP, phone NHS Direct on **0845 4647**. They will help you find a GP.

Or, your local health authority can provide a list of GPs in the area. To register, you should approach the GP and either hand in your medical card or fill in a simple form. If you have any difficulty in registering with a GP, you should contact the health authority.

Contact your practice nurse or GP

When you first register with a GP, you should ask for a copy of the practice leaflet. The practice leaflet will tell you when the surgery is open, how to make an appointment for a consultation and the arrangements for getting advice over the phone and for home visits. It will also tell you how to contact your GP outside normal surgery hours and how to order a repeat prescription.



Your practice nurse or GP will explain what is wrong with you, the best treatment for your condition, and the likely outcome. Your practice nurse or GP will listen to your concerns and take account of them.

If your GP needs to refer you to hospital, you will be told why you are being referred, and what will happen when you go into hospital.

If your GP gives you a prescription, you can take it to a pharmacy. You need to fill in the back of the form and sign it before giving it to your pharmacist. You will have to pay a charge for your prescription and any other health costs, unless you are eligible for free or reduced costs. In this case, you will need to prove this. If you claim exemption when you are not entitled, you may have to pay a fine.

Your pharmacist will, in most cases, be able to give you the prescribed medicine and information and advice about it straightaway. If your pharmacist cannot give you the prescribed medicine on the spot, he or she will tell you when it will be ready for you to pick up. This often will be on the same or the following day.



Contact your dentist

Your dentist will give you information on the full range, quality and costs of treatment and preventive care available on the NHS. At the time of your first visit, your dentist will give you a treatment plan.

If you are registered with a dentist, you are entitled to receive routine treatment and the dentist will also arrange urgent out-of-hours treatment.

From April 2001, if you are not registered with a dentist, NHS Direct will help you to find a dentist either for routine or urgent treatment. This may be in one of the new dental access centres, which provide a full range of NHS dental treatment to people who are not registered.

For urgent out-of-hours treatment phone your dentist or NHS Direct on **0845 4647**.



Contact your optician

Your optician will tell you if you are eligible for a free NHS sight test.

Immediately after the sight test you will either be given a statement showing that you do not need glasses or a prescription for glasses. You can take the prescription to the optician of your choice to get your glasses. You should also ask your optician if you are eligible for help with the cost of glasses.

Visit an NHS walk-in centre

4 NHS walk-in centres are opening in some major cities and towns across England. Walk-in centres complement general practice by providing treatment for minor ailments and injuries (such as strains and sprains), health promotion and self-care advice. They are run by nurses and you don't have to book an appointment. Most walk-in centres are open from 7am until 10pm.

You can find out if there is a walk-in centre near you by calling NHS Direct on **0845 4647**.



What improvements can you expect in the future?

To find out when a pharmacy is open in the evening or at the weekend, you will be able to phone NHS Direct or use NHS Direct Online.

To help you choose which GP to register with, we will publish more information about each GP practice.

By 2004:

- you will be able to see a health professional (such as a practice nurse) within 24 hours, and have a GP appointment within 48 hours
- people with chronic conditions will be able to pick up a repeat supply of their medicines from their pharmacist, without having to go back to their GP each time
- you may be treated in a GP practice instead of having to travel to hospital for treatment.





Do you think you need urgent medical treatment?

You can:

- call the telephone helpline NHS Direct
- contact your GP for an urgent appointment
- go to your nearest accident and emergency department or minor injuries unit
- call 999 for an ambulance.

4



NHS Direct is a confidential 24-hour telephone helpline. By calling 0845 4647, you can speak to a nurse for advice at any time of the day or night wherever you are in England.



Call the telephone helpline NHS Direct

NHS Direct can refer you to your GP out-of-hours service, arrange for a GP to phone you back or advise you whether you should go to your local accident and emergency department. They will also put you through to the ambulance service, if necessary. Call **0845 4647**.

Contact your GP for an urgent appointment

Your GP provides an emergency service outside normal surgery opening hours. Phone the number given in your GP's practice leaflet. Your GP must make sure that all patients have access to appropriate general medical care 24 hours a day. If you need medicine urgently when pharmacies are closed, your GP will tell you what to do.

Go to your nearest accident and emergency department or minor injuries unit

You should be assessed by a nurse or doctor, depending on how urgent your case is, within 15 minutes of your arrival and told how quickly you will be treated. The decision whether to admit you will be made after you have been given any necessary tests and treatment in the accident and emergency department.



If you then need to be admitted into hospital from the accident and emergency department, you will be placed in a bed as soon as possible. This should happen within two hours of the decision to admit you.

Call 999 for an ambulance

In cases which are life-threatening, our aim is to get an ambulance or paramedic to you within eight minutes of you making your call.

In cases which are serious but not immediately life-threatening, our aim is to get an ambulance or paramedic to you within 14 minutes in an urban area and 19 minutes in rural areas.

If your condition appears less serious, you may be put through to the telephone helpline NHS Direct. An experienced nurse will go through your condition in more detail and advise you on the most appropriate service that can help you. Or, they may even give you self-care advice.



What improvements can I expect to see in the future?

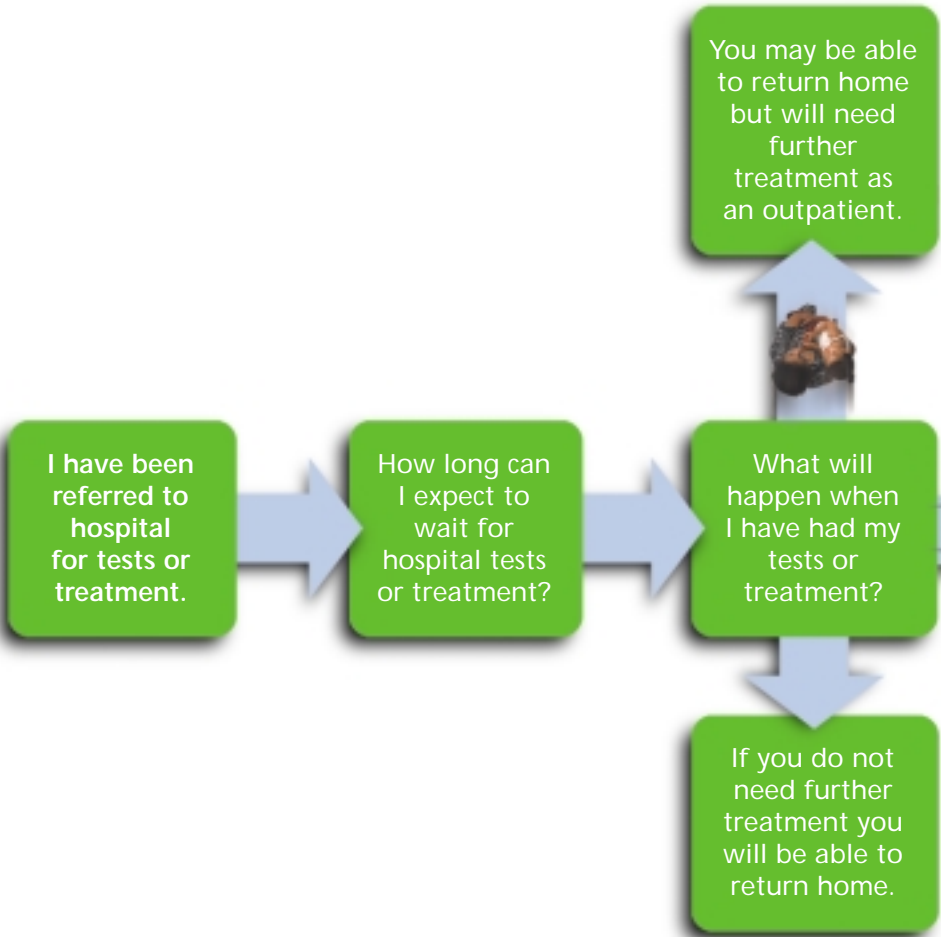
Over time, there will be local arrangements to make sure that you can get medicines you need urgently easily, even when pharmacies are closed.

By 2004:

- No-one should wait more than four hours in accident and emergency departments from arrival to admission, transfer or discharge. As a result, average waiting times in accident and emergency will fall to 75 minutes.
- Paramedics will be trained and equipped to provide clot-busting drugs to heart attack patients who need them, making sure they get effective treatment even sooner.
- Ambulances will be equipped with video and other monitoring links so that emergency patients get even better care on the way to hospital.
- All young people who experience a first episode of mental illness (such as schizophrenia) will receive the early and intensive support they need.

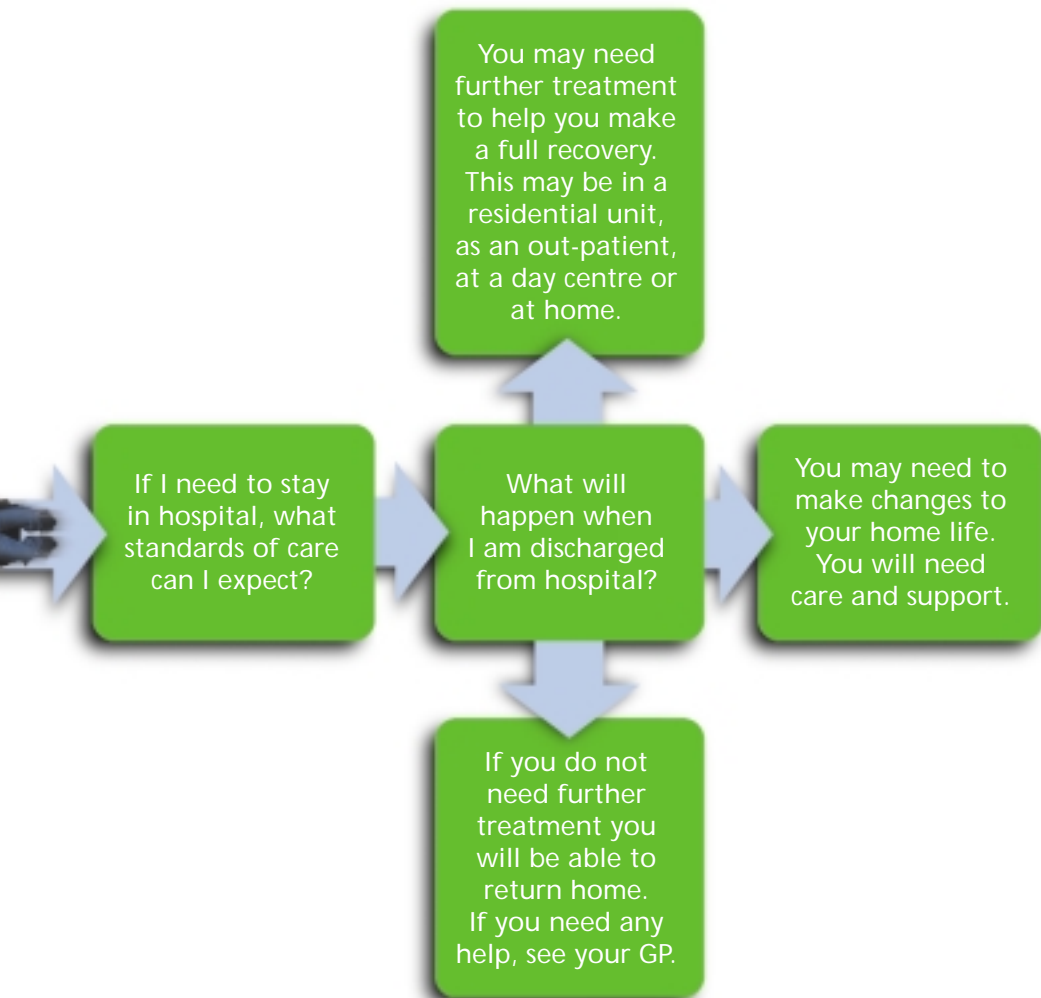


I have been referred to hospital for tests or treatment...



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5



Hospital treatment

Most of the time, the treatment you receive from your practice nurse, GP, dentist or optician will be enough for you to get better and return to your normal routine. However, in some circumstances hospital treatment may be necessary.

Whether you are referred for tests or treatment it may be useful to know the following.

- How long can I expect to wait for hospital tests or treatment?
- What standards of care can I expect?
- What happens when I am discharged from hospital?



How long can I expect to wait for hospital tests or treatment?

Your GP, dentist or optician will be able to arrange for you to be seen in hospital and you should be given regular information about how long you will have to wait.

We are taking action to reduce waiting times.

- As an outpatient, you can expect to wait no more than 26 weeks. Already more than seven out of ten patients will be seen within 13 weeks of seeing their GP, dentist or optician.
- At the outpatient clinic you should be seen within 30 minutes of your appointment time.
- As an inpatient you can expect to wait no more than 18 months. Already more than three out of four inpatients are admitted within three months of seeing their GP, dentist or optician.
- If your GP or dentist refers you urgently with suspected cancer, you will be seen by a specialist within two weeks.
- If you are suffering from chest pain for the first time and your GP thinks this might be due to angina, you will be assessed in a specialist chest pain clinic within two weeks. This will be available in 139 hospitals from April 2001, and accessible to all patients by 2003.



What standards of care can I expect?

Your hospital will either write to you with your appointment date, time and directions to your clinic or they may ask you to phone them to make an appointment on a suitable date. They will tell you what will happen during and after your appointment, and give you a phone number to ring if you have any questions.

Your nurse or doctor will explain what is wrong with you, the different treatments for your condition, and the risks and benefits of each treatment. They will discuss this with you and listen to your views. If you decide to go ahead with your treatment, you may be asked to sign a consent form, after you have been given a full explanation of the proposed treatment.

You can expect to be involved in all decisions about your treatment. This will include decisions as to whether it is appropriate to attempt to resuscitate you after heart or breathing failure.

We will keep any relative or friend you name informed about your condition.

We will respect your privacy and keep your health records secure. You can see your records if you ask.

You may be asked to take part in medical research or medical student training. You do not have to agree to this.



NHS staff will respect your privacy and dignity. They will be sensitive to, and respect, your religious, spiritual and cultural needs at all times.

You will be treated fairly by NHS staff, according to your healthcare needs, regardless of age, sex, disability or sexuality.

If you need to stay in hospital, the following will apply.

- All patient areas, visitors' toilets, outpatient and accident and emergency units (including chairs, linen, pillows, furniture, floor coverings and blinds) will be kept clean.
- In most cases, you should be offered treatment in single-sex hospital accommodation.
- Your nutritional needs and dietary requirements will be assessed (for medical, religious or cultural reasons). You will be provided with a variety of good food, and given any help that you need to eat or order your meals.
- From 2001, there will be a 24-hour NHS catering service with a new NHS menu operating in all NHS hospitals.



National standards of care for cancer, mental health problems and coronary heart disease have been set out in the new national service frameworks. If you would like a copy please phone **0541 555 455**, or visit the following websites.

www.doh.gov.uk/nsf/cancer.htm

www.doh.gov.uk/nsf/mentalhealth.htm

www.doh.gov.uk/nsf/coronary.htm

What will happen when I am discharged from hospital?

From the moment you arrive, arrangements for discharging you from hospital will begin, and your discharge plan will be agreed with you taking account of your needs and wants. When you are ready to leave hospital, the nurses and doctors will talk to you about what will happen to you during your recovery and you will be told who to contact in an emergency.

If you need ongoing care at home, your GP, midwife, health visitor, community nurse or social services department will be there to help you.

If you need any medical equipment for your return home, the NHS and your social services department will aim to provide it promptly. If you need your home to be adapted in any way, your social services department will assess your needs.



What improvements can you expect in the future?

In future, you will be sent copies of letters between any doctors involved in your care unless you ask not to receive these.

From 2002:

- if your operation is cancelled by the hospital on the day of surgery for non-clinical reasons, the hospital will have to offer another date within the next 28 days, or pay for your treatment at the time and hospital of your choice
- the Government will get rid of mixed-sex NHS accommodation. 95% of NHS accommodation will be single-sex by 2002.



What improvements can you expect in the future?

By 2004:

- nobody should have their discharge from hospital delayed because they are waiting for an assessment of their needs, support at home (such as adaptations or equipment) or other NHS care needed to help them recover
- eight new diagnostic and treatment centres will be up and running with another 12 centres being developed (providing rapid access to a range of one-stop consultation, investigation and treatment services, so you can be treated in a single day or with a short stay)
- all people in contact with specialist mental health services will be able to use crisis resolution services at any time
- half of all hospitals will have new 'ward housekeepers' in place, to make sure that the quality, presentation and quantity of meals is of a high standard.



By the end of 2005:

- if you have cancer, the longest time you will have to wait from diagnosis to treatment will be one month (we are already starting to put this into practice for some cancers)
- waiting lists for all hospital appointments and admissions will be replaced with booking systems that allow you to choose a convenient date and time, within a guaranteed maximum waiting time
- the longest time you have to wait for a routine outpatient appointment will be three months
- the longest time you have to wait for inpatient treatment will be six months.




I need care and support

I need care
and support

I will need
help for the next few
months or longer.
What services are
available to help me?

I care for a person
with a long-term illness.
What support can I get
to help me do this?





**support from your carer,
family and friends**

voluntary organisations - for support and advice (for more information phone NHS Direct on **0845 4647**)

social security - for advice on benefits and allowances (phone the benefit enquiry line on **0800 88 22 00**)

housing authority - for advice on accommodation options and adaptations (contact the housing department of your local authority)

social services - for help in the home, a care assistant, meals on wheels and other services (contact the social services department of your local authority)

local authority - for advice on education and employment

health services - talk to your GP, practice nurse, district nurse, health visitor, community health nurse or hospital staff





Some long-term conditions (such as arthritis) need specialist healthcare. You will often get this care from teams of professionals from many different disciplines. All health professionals involved in your care will give you the information you want about your condition and medication.

- I will need help for the next few months or longer. What services are available to help me?
- I care for a person with a long-term illness. What support can I get to help me do this?



I will need help for the next few months or longer. What services are available to help me?

You should talk to hospital staff, your practice nurse, GP or social services department when you are discharged. They will work together with you to identify what your needs are and an appropriate care plan. They will also be able to put you in touch with the other local organisations who will be able to help you.

There are local charters for long-term care called Better Care - Higher Standards. They tell anyone who needs long-term care or support over the long term (such as home care services and personal help or care in a nursing home), what their local authority and health services can provide and how they can get these services more easily.

You can order a copy by phoning your local authority or health authority or for more information visit:

www.doh.gov.uk/longtermcare/index.htm

There are local standards and targets for improvement in housing, health and social services in the following six main areas.

- Helping users and carers to find out about services.
- Understanding and responding to the needs of users and carers.



- Finding a suitable place to live.
- Helping people to stay independent.
- Getting the right healthcare.
- Helping carers to care.

They will also include information about any charges you have to pay to local authorities.

I care for a person with a long-term illness. What support can I get to help me do this?

Better Care - Higher Standards sets out standards and provides information on:

- access to services and how your needs as a carer will be assessed
- local carer support services
- types of breaks for carers
- involvement in discussions about treatment and help in the home.



What improvements can you expect in the future?

From April 2001:

- a national service framework for older people will, for the first time, set national standards for caring for older people, including those who have mental health problems
- we will not take account of the value of a person's home from the means-testing rules for the first three months of residential or nursing-home care.

From October 2001, nursing care will be free in any setting, including nursing homes. The NHS will meet the costs of registered nurses providing, delegating or supervising care in nursing homes. This will depend on a decision by Parliament.

By 2004 a new level of services will provide high-quality care closer to home, helping older people avoid hospital stays when not needed and promoting active rehabilitation and recovery. The new services will give older people more independence rather than forcing them to choose a care home.



↓ What can I do if I have concerns or I want to complain?

Most of the time most people get the care they want and are cared for by well-trained, dedicated staff. But like any large organisation, things can go wrong and we may not be able to reach all of our standards all of the time.

We are always trying to improve our service, and have set up the independent Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) to monitor the quality of care being provided throughout the NHS. The Commission for Health Improvement will inspect all NHS organisations and will make sure that action is taken to improve standards where necessary, and that examples of good practice are shared rapidly to benefit everyone.



What can I do if I have concerns about my care?

If you have particular concerns, you should speak to someone involved in your care first (such as a doctor, nurse, receptionist, or practice manager). In many cases it should be possible to sort out the problem straight away.

If you want to talk to someone who is not involved in your care, you can contact your local community health council who will be able to help. You can find their number in the phone book.

During 2002, depending on legislation, community health councils will have been replaced by new arrangements (see page 44 or visit: www.nhs.uk/voice/). They will give patients a greater say in how the NHS is run and deal with your concerns.

From 2001 onwards, we will introduce a new patient advocacy and liaison service (PALS) to act for you and try to sort out your problem straight away. By April 2002, a patient advocacy and liaison service will be available in all NHS and primary care trusts.

If you want to change your GP, you can go to the GP practice of your choice and ask to be registered. GPs do not have to accept everyone who asks to be registered as a patient. Your local health authority can help you if you have any difficulty in registering with another GP.



What can I do if I want to complain?

All NHS trusts, GPs, dentists, opticians and pharmacists have a complaints procedure. You can phone or write to the person who handles complaints, who will make sure your complaint is investigated. Your complaint will not put your care at risk. Complaints are a very good way for us to learn how we can improve the NHS.

You can phone NHS Direct on **0845 4647** who will tell you how to complain and put you in touch with someone who can help you make your complaint if necessary.

In future if you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint, we will make arrangements for you to receive further independent support (such as from a Citizens' Advice Bureau) in taking your complaint forward.

What can I expect if I make a complaint?

If you are not satisfied with your treatment, or if we do not maintain our standards, we will give you a full explanation and an apology, where this is appropriate.

The NHS will:

- investigate any complaint about NHS services (including NHS patients treated in the private sector) and aim to improve services to prevent the problem from happening again



- send a full written reply from the relevant chief executive or complaints manager within four weeks of receiving a complaint. If this cannot be achieved, we will keep you informed of any progress.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of this, you can, within 28 days of receiving the written reply, ask for an independent review. This will be considered by a convener who will decide, within four weeks, whether to refer the matter back for further investigation or to set up an independent review panel or take no further action.

The independent review panel will re-examine the concerns put to it, and will produce a report which sets out the results of the investigation, along with the conclusions and any appropriate comments or suggestions. You will receive a copy of the report, and the chief executive will write and tell you of any action being taken as a result of the panel's recommendation.

If you are still not satisfied once the NHS complaints procedure has been completed, you can ask the Health Service Commissioner (sometimes known as the Ombudsman) to investigate your case. The Ombudsman is independent of both Government and the NHS. They do not have to investigate every complaint, but will usually do so if there is clear evidence of hardship or injustice.



What improvements can you expect in the future?

We will involve patients and the public in shaping local services so we can avoid things going wrong in the first place. In particular, from 2002, depending on legislation, the following will apply.

- All NHS organisations will have to ask patients and carers for their views on the services they have received and publish in a patient prospectus what action will be taken as a result. This will be linked to financial rewards to improve standards and will also include local information on services available (such as voluntary organisations in your area).
- A patient advocacy and liaison service (PALS) will be available in all NHS and primary care trusts to help sort out problems straight away.
- An independent, statutory patients' forum will be set up in every trust (and will for the first time elect a patient to the trust board) so patients can have their say in how local NHS services are run.



- Each health authority area will have to set up an independent local advisory forum chosen from residents of the area, to provide a sounding board for deciding on local health priorities and policies.
- Health services will be scrutinised by local authorities which have been elected democratically.
- In particular, your local council will scrutinise all major changes to local health services. If the committee involved is not satisfied that the planned changes are in the best interests of the local population, or that there has been enough consultation, they can refer the decision to the newly-formed Independent Reconfiguration Panel (which will include patient representative members). They will then consider the 'evidence' and give independent advice and recommendations on the decision.



What improvements can you expect in the future?

At the moment the Government is evaluating the complaints procedure. The Government will act on the outcome of this evaluation and reform the complaints procedure to make it more independent and meet patients' needs.

The NHS Plan is introducing new ways to strengthen the complaints and redress procedures when things go wrong.

From 2002, if your operation is cancelled by the hospital on the day of surgery for non-clinical reasons, the hospital will have to offer another date within the next 28 days. If they cannot do this, they will pay for your treatment at the time and hospital of your choice.



How will I know if standards are really improving?

The NHS Plan has set new standards of service that we expect to be achieved across the whole of the NHS in England. It is a 10-year plan for reform. It will of course take time to achieve it all. But over the next few years you will see major improvements in your local health services.

As we improve quality throughout the NHS so we expect satisfaction in services to increase. We will monitor performance against national and local standards (including the effectiveness of improved training for nurses and doctors) using regular patient surveys carried out in all NHS trusts and by the Commission for Health Improvement.

We will publish survey results every year in a patient prospectus, showing how we measured standards, progress made against them, and new local priorities for the next year. This way, you will be able to see for yourself how standards are improving and what you can expect in the future.



How can I get more information about the NHS? ↓

If you want the latest news and information about the Department of Health and our work, and easy access to the wide range of publications, policy and guidance we produce, visit **www.doh.gov.uk**

If you want to find out more about how the NHS works and about your local NHS services, visit **www.nhs.uk**

For quality health information and advice on the Internet visit NHS Direct Online
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

For health information and advice or details of local services, please call:

- NHS Direct on **0845 4647**; or
- your local health authority.



What improvements can you expect in the future?

Starting in 2001, a new national agency called NHSplus will:

- make sure patients get greater access to information (such as leaflets and books) about how they can care for themselves and their families
- make information available for employers, about how they can identify and provide NHS occupational health services, to maintain and improve the health of their employees.



If I have any comments to make, who should I send them to?

As part of our commitment to improve the NHS we will be keeping 'Your Guide to the NHS' under review and we welcome your views and opinions. From 2003 the Government will evaluate the success of the 'Guide', after which, we will publish a revised version.

If you want to make a suggestion or comment on this booklet, please write to:

Your Guide to the NHS
Department of Health
3E58 Quarry House
Quarry Hill
Leeds
LS2 7UE.

E-mail yourguidetothens@doh.gsi.gov.uk

Or, phone NHS Direct on **0845 4647**.



NHS Direct →

Help is at hand.

NHS Direct is a new 24-hour, nurse-led helpline, available to everyone in England. Providing advice if you or a family member have a minor accident or illness, it also has listings for local health services, such as dentists, doctors or out-of-hours pharmacies. Whatever the time of day, you'll always have instant access to a wide range of health information and advice. In fact, everything you need to get better, faster. Just call 0845 4647, anytime.

GET THE RIGHT TREATMENT.



How can I get further copies?

Call the Health Literature Line for a single copy of this booklet Freephone **0800 555777**, 8am to 6pm.

The booklet is published in the following languages.

English, Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, French, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Polish, Punjabi, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese.

You may also call to order the 'Guide' for people with learning disabilities or an audio cassette recording or a Braille version of the text for blind or visually-impaired people.

**For bulk orders call the NHS Responseline
0541 555 455.**

You can also visit our website at
www.nhs.uk/nhsguide

or write to:

PO Box 777, London SE1 6XH.

Fax: 01623 724 524





smoking:

A 3D-rendered cigarette with a brown filter and a white end. A white ribbon is looped around the white end of the cigarette, forming a continuous loop that passes through the cigarette's end, symbolizing the NHS.

Don't give up giving up

NHS Smoking Helpline

0800 169 0 169

for friendly help, advice and local information
on how to stop smoking

