

# Your part in the annual health check

**This is a step by step guide for patient and public involvement forums that provides a route map and **check list of suggested actions** that will help you through the new process.**

The annual health check is the Healthcare Commission's new system of assessment for all NHS trusts in England. It replaces star ratings and is designed to provide a fuller picture of the performance of a trust, including an assessment of a trust's performance against the Department of Health's 24 core standards, which were introduced in July 2004.

Under the new approach trusts will be asked to tell us how they think they are performing against those standards over the period from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2005 until March 31<sup>st</sup> 2006 (which we are calling a declaration). They will be required to do this in April 2006. As it is a new system we are conducting an early process in October 2005, when trusts will be required to provide us with their comments about how they have performed (a draft declaration) for the period between April 1<sup>st</sup> 2005 and September 30<sup>th</sup> 2005.

Patient and public involvement forums are being invited to make comments on the performance of their local trusts both in October 2005 and at the time of the final declaration in April 2006.

This guide will take you through the steps you and your forum might wish to consider in the lead up to the draft declaration and beyond. **These are only suggestions and each forum will have its own way of working with the new system, but we hope they will help you to plan your activities and be prepared to play your important role in the new annual health check.**

**There are a number of guides, outlined below, that have been produced, explaining the annual health check. If you need a copy of any of these please contact the Healthcare Commission on 0845 601 3012 or e-mail [feedback@healthcarecommission.org.uk](mailto:feedback@healthcarecommission.org.uk)**



**Annual health check**



**\*Criteria for assessing core standards**  
The standards are outlined in these documents



**Guidance for assessing core standards**

\*These are available for PCT's, ambulance services, acute services and mental health and learning disability services

# September 2005

We want patient and public involvement forums and overview and scrutiny committees to be involved in this process as you often have important and useful feedback from the community and from the experiences and views of patients. This really helps us to understand how a trust is performing. More importantly it helps us to ensure we are putting patients at the heart of everything we do.

This is the first year of the annual health check and we will be learning and listening to your views on the process, and changing it if necessary, but will continue to keep you updated.

Review your current work programme in relation to the 24 core standards and decide which ones you feel able to comment on. You should be starting to think about the trust's performance against the core standards so you are ready to send the trust your comments, which they must include unedited on their draft declaration form.

**Please remember you don't have to comment on all 24 core standards. Only comment on those you have knowledge of. You are not expected to have an in depth expertise on any of the standards.**

The trust must seek your comments and should contact you in October or before. However, you may wish to contact your local trust to establish when they will be submitting their draft declaration and agree the date by which you will be providing them with your comments for inclusion. The deadline date for submission of the draft declaration is October 31<sup>st</sup> 2005 but trusts will be working to different timescales. You may want to think now about setting up regular meetings with the trust in order to begin talking about what your forum might say.

# September 2005

Always think about why you are making your comments – do you have good examples to back up the points you are making?

You may want to think about areas of good practice but also think about any areas for improvement that you would like to comment on. If you decide that you will be commenting negatively on the trust's performance against one of the core standards then you will need to have gathered suitable examples to support this. These examples do not need to be submitted with your comments but may be required by the Healthcare Commission if we need to do any selective follow up.

**You may also wish to draft your commentary and share it with your trust and ask for their feedback, but you don't have to take this into account if you do not want to.**

You may want to think about establishing contact with your local overview and scrutiny committee to discuss your respective roles and maybe share some examples of best practice in reviewing the trust's performance against the core standards.

## October 2005

Trusts have until October 31<sup>st</sup> 2005 to submit their draft declaration to the Healthcare Commission. By early October, or before, you should have established the actual date of your trust's submission, and when your forum needs to submit your comments to the trust in time for them to be included.

**Trusts are required to include your comments unedited in their declaration. You do not have to wait for your trust to finish their draft declaration – you can send them your comments at any time.**

Please remember **you are not currently being asked to sign off or even comment directly on the trust's declaration.** If you have been asked to comment, but have said no for any reason, then neither you nor the trust will be penalised.

# October 2005

If you feel you cannot comment at all that is absolutely fine. This may be because your forum has only a small number of members or your current work plan does not allow you to incorporate this new activity in the first year of the annual health check. It would be helpful if you could submit a comment to this effect so that the trust can state this within their draft declaration submission.

**The trust should send you a copy of their declaration form once they have completed and submitted it so you can ensure they have included your comments.**

When we receive the trust's draft declaration we will be checking they have included comments from patient and public involvement forums and overview and scrutiny committees and if not asking them why. If you have been asked to comment, but have said no, for any of the reasons we've already mentioned, then neither you nor the trust will be penalised.

**The Healthcare Commission will be looking at these comments and taking them into account when assessing trusts and then eventually awarding them an overall rating.**

# November 2005 – January 2006

The Healthcare Commission will be considering the comments you have submitted. Your comments will be one of the many sources of data we will use in order to cross check the trust's declaration.

During this period we will be cross checking the trust's comments about their performance. We will be examining all the information we have about the trust, as well as reviewing the comments from you, overview and scrutiny committees and for non-foundation trusts, strategic health authorities.

As part of the cross checking process we will arrange follow up checks with up to 20% of all trusts – approximately 10% will be at random and another 10% will be those trusts we have identified from the cross checking information as being most at risk of not meeting the core standards. If your local trust falls within this group your forum may be contacted by one of our regional representatives to discuss your comments.

You might want to start thinking about your work programme for this period and how it might relate to the final declaration as well as how you might want to amend the comments you made for the draft declaration.

**Always think about how to back up the comments you are making with good examples.**

You may want to speak to other patient and public involvement forums in your area and with other community/voluntary groups as well as with the local overview and scrutiny committee.

# February 2006 – April 2006

During this time you might want to start thinking about your 2006/2007 work programme and how you can bring it into line with the core standards to help you gather examples to support your comments in the future.

**You may want to start preparing your final comments in March ready to submit to your local trust in April.**

During this time you may also want to open discussion with your trust about the final declaration.

Think about the trust's performance against the core standards so you are ready to send the trust your comments, which they must include unedited on their final declaration form.

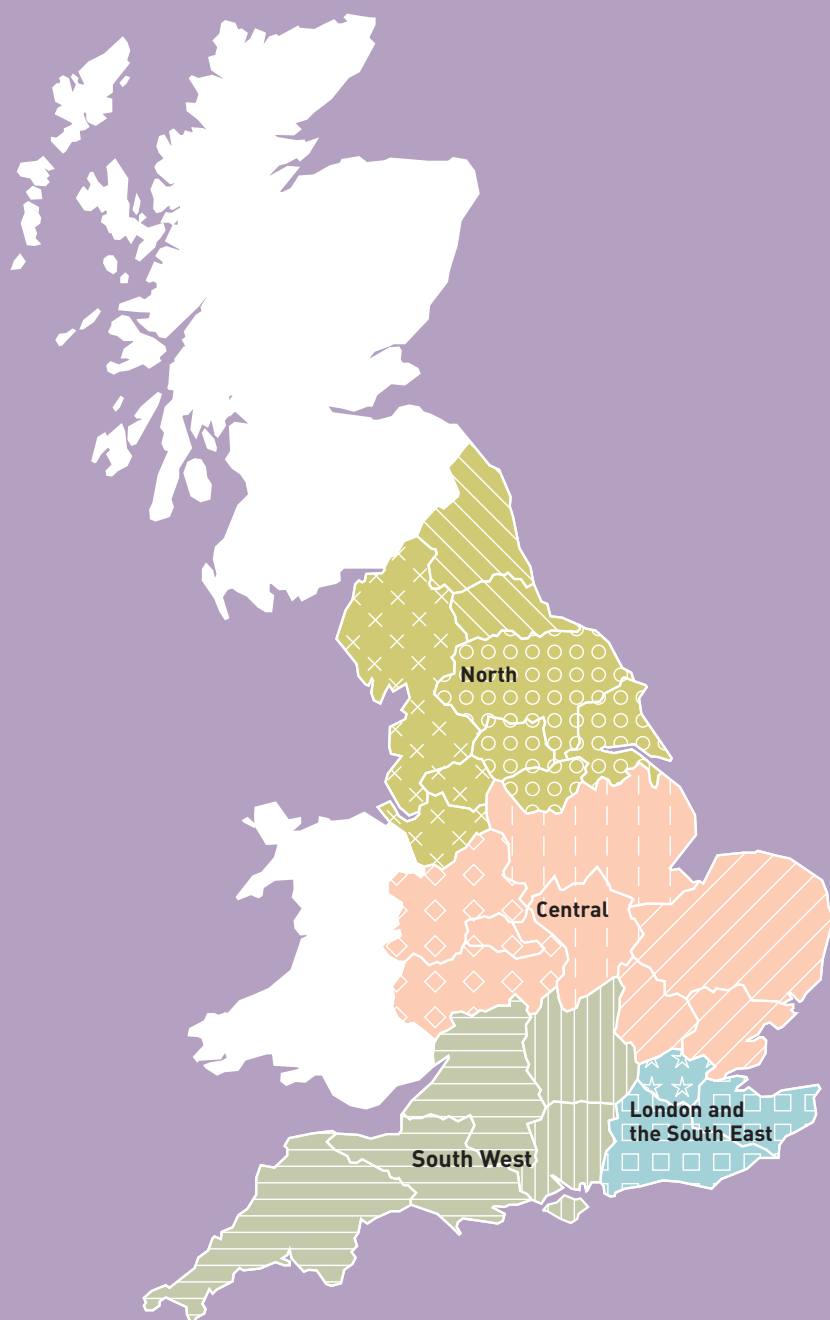
**Please remember you don't have to comment on all 24 core standards. Only comment on those you have knowledge of. You are not expected to have an in depth expert knowledge on any of the standards.**

Try and think about areas of good practice but also think about any areas for improvement that you would like to comment on. If you decide that you will be commenting negatively on the trust's performance against one of the core standards then you will need to have gathered suitable examples to support this. The examples do not need to be submitted with your comments but may be required by the Healthcare Commission.

You may also wish to share a draft of your comments with your trust and ask for feedback from them, but you don't have to take their comments/views into account if you do not want to.

The trust's final declaration comments will be produced by April 30<sup>th</sup> 2006 and will need to be made public when completed.

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This information is available in other formats and languages on request.

**Please telephone 0845 601 3012.**