

Your part in the annual health check

This guide is for health overview and scrutiny committees and provides a route map and check list of suggested actions to help you take part in the new annual health check, whether your overview and scrutiny committee relates to one primary care trust (PCT) and/or NHS trust, or several.

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

Under the new approach, PCTs and trusts will be asked to tell the Healthcare Commission about how they think they are performing against those standards over the period from April 1st 2005 until March 31st 2006 (using a 'declaration'). Trusts will be required to provide the declaration in April 2006. As it is a new system, the Healthcare Commission is conducting an early process in October 2005, when PCTs and trusts will be required to give an early version of their statement about how they are performing (a 'draft' declaration) for the period between April 1st 2005 and September 30th 2005.

Overview and scrutiny committees, along with patient and public involvement forums and strategic health authorities, are being invited to make comments on the performance of their local PCTs and trusts at both the draft stage in October 2005 and the final declaration in April 2006.

This guide will take you through the steps you might wish to consider in the lead up to the draft declaration and beyond. These are only suggestions and each overview and scrutiny committee will develop 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



Annual health check



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



Guidance for assessing core standards

*These are available for PCTs, ambulance services, acute services and mental health and learning disability services

September 2005

We would like overview and scrutiny committees to be involved in this process as they often have important and useful feedback from communities and from the experiences and views of patients. This helps us to understand how PCTs and trusts are performing. More importantly, it helps us to ensure that trusts are putting patients and the public at the heart of everything they do.

This is the first year of the new annual health check and we will be listening to your views on the process, and changing it if necessary. So things may change and overview and scrutiny committees will continue to be kept updated.

You may want to think about the 24 core standards and the seven areas they fall into and review the outcomes of your overview and scrutiny committee's work programme and decide whether any findings, conclusions or recommendations can help you to comment on your PCT and/or trust.

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

September 2005

PCTs and trusts must seek your comments and should contact you in, or by, October 2005. However, you may contact your local PCTs and trusts 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 31st 2005 but PCTs and trusts may be working to different timescales. You may want to think now about setting up regular meetings with PCTs and trusts. If your overview and scrutiny committee relates to several PCTs and trusts you do not have to comment on the performance of all of them - it's up to you.

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

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 a PCT or 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 PCTs and trusts and ask for their comments, 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 patient and public involvement forums to discuss respective roles and maybe share some examples of best practice in reviewing PCTs and trusts' performance against the core standards.

October 2005

PCTs and trusts have until October 31st 2005 to submit their draft declaration to the Healthcare Commission and by early October, or before, you should have established the actual date of the PCT or trust's submission, and when you need to submit your comments in time for them to be included.

PCTs and trusts are required to include your comments unedited in their declaration.

Please remember you are not being asked to sign off or comment directly on a PCT or trust's declaration. You are only being asked to comment on their performance against the core standards, where you feel able to comment.

October 2005

If you feel you cannot comment at all that is absolutely fine but it would be useful to let us know why, for example, if you are understaffed.

The PCT and trust should send you 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 overview and scrutiny committees and if not asking them why. If you have been asked to comment, but have said no, then neither you nor the trust will be penalised.

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

November 2005 – January 2006

The Healthcare Commission will be considering the comments you have submitted.

During this period we will be cross checking declarations about trusts' performance. We will be examining all the information we have about them, as well as reviewing the comments from overview and scrutiny committees, patient and public involvement forums and strategic health authorities.

As part of the cross checking process we will arrange follow up checks with up to 20% of all PCTs and 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 PCT or trust falls within this group your overview and scrutiny committee may be contacted by a Healthcare Commission regional representative to discuss your comments, and to review the examples you have gathered to support them.

You might want to think about how your work programme for this period 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 make with good examples.

You may want to speak to other overview and scrutiny committees and patient and public involvement forums that relate to your committee's PCTs and trusts. The Centre for Public Scrutiny has produced a document providing tips for working with forums. The document *Local authority overview and scrutiny committee and patient and public involvement forums: working together, a practical guide* can be obtained from www.cfps.org.uk.

February 2006 – June 2006

During this time you might want to start thinking about your 2006/2007 work programme and whether you wish to carry out reviews that will help you gather evidence to support your comments in future. Don't forget though that the annual health check is only one part of the health and healthcare agenda.

You may want to start preparing your final comments in March ready to submit to your local PCTs and trusts in April 2006.

During this time you may also want to open discussions with your PCTs and trusts about the final declaration.

Think about PCTs and trusts' performance against the core standards so you are ready to send them your comments, which they must include unedited on their declaration form.

Please remember you don't have to comment on all 24 core standards, or about each PCT or trust you relate to. Only comment on those you have knowledge of. You are not expected to have an in depth knowledge on any of the standards.

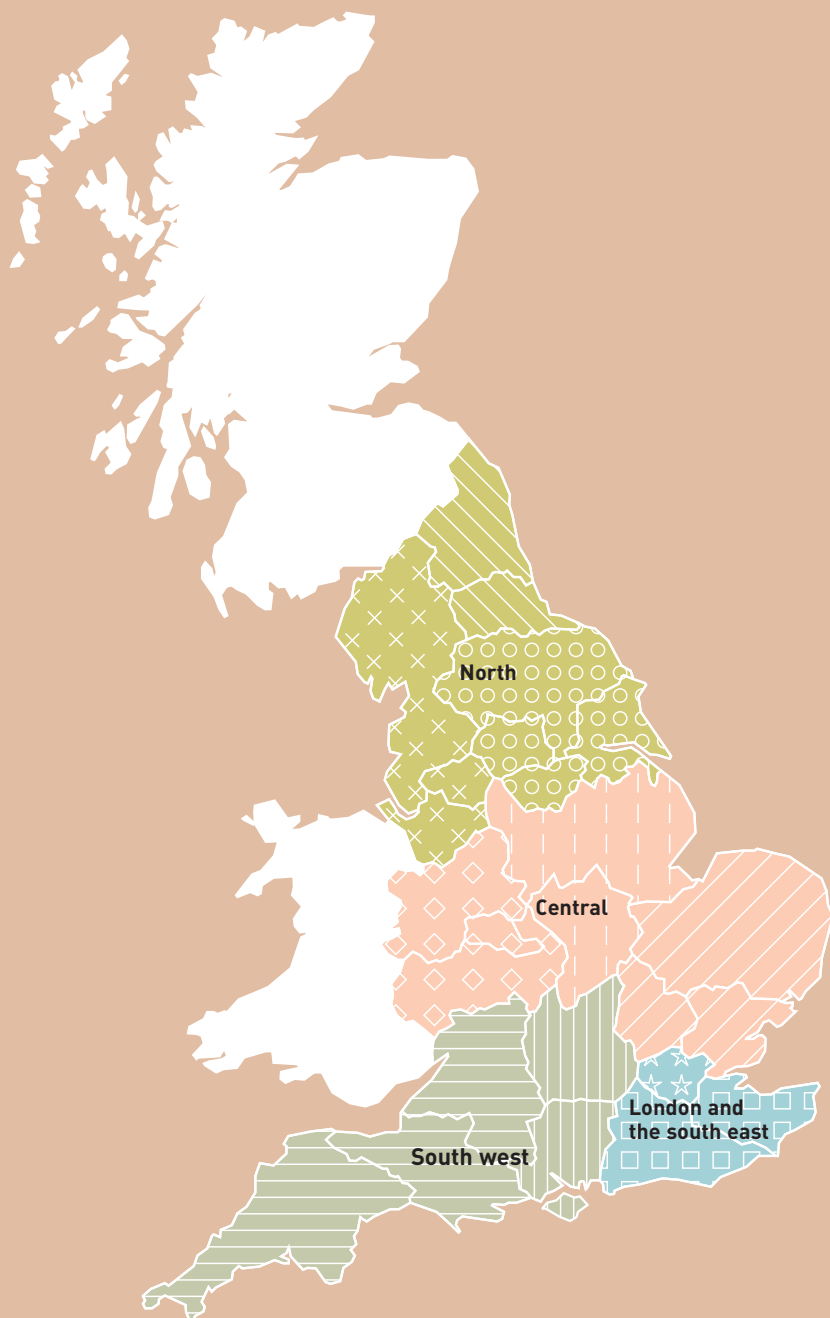
Try and think about areas of good practice but also think about any areas for improvement that you would like to comment on. If you decide that you will be commenting negatively on performance against one of the core standards then you will need to have gathered suitable evidence to support this. The evidence does 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 PCTs and trusts and ask for feedback from them, but you don't have to take their views/comments into account if you do not want to.

The final declaration will be produced by April 30th 2006 and will need to be made public when completed.

When you plan your work programme for 2006/2007, remember that the annual health check will take place in March and April 2007.

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

Please telephone 0845 601 3012.