

NHS HEALTH DIRECT

Early Adopter Programme: Further Guidance for SHAs and PCTs

Background

The White Paper *Choosing Health: Making Healthier Choices Easier*, published in November 2004, set out a challenging programme to prevent unnecessary deaths and make it easier for people to make healthier choices by offering them practical support and services to adopt a healthier lifestyle. It signals the Government's intention to refocus the NHS into a service for improving health as well as one that treats sickness.

A key component of the *Choosing Health* White Paper is the intention to establish a new public service called Health Direct:

"We will commission a new service – Health Direct – to provide easily accessible and confidential information on health choices. Health Direct will be set up from 2007...Health Direct will be developed as a telephone, internet and digital tv service" (*Choosing Health* Ch2 Paras 30-31)

NHS Direct has been identified as the preferred provider for the NHS Health Direct service and has now developed the Business Case. A key component of the Business Case is that the service will be initially be piloted and evaluated through an Early Adopter Programme in 2007, prior to national roll-out in 2008.

Objectives of Early Adopter Programme

The Early Adopter Programme is intended to minimise risk and develop clear learning on how the service can best be developed and implemented at national scale. The Early Adopter phase will include testing of consumer and stakeholder reactions to the service, user preferences for channels and content, effectiveness of marketing approaches, and how realistic and achievable are the Key Performance Indicators.

Crucially, the learning from the Early Adopter will be used to inform the case for funding from 2008-9 onwards, to be made during 2007 under the Comprehensive Spending Review. Justification of the level of funding and appropriate spending mix will be highly dependent on the findings from the Early Adopter, strengthening the need to commence the pilot as soon as possible in 2007.

Services to be provided

The NHS Health Direct services provided in the Early Adopter Programme will be as close as possible to the national service due to be rolled out in 2008. Access to the Early Adopter service will, therefore, be provided via the internet, digital television (both satellite and Freeview) and mobile. Services will include:

- Personal health assessment tool
- Information on local health improvement services and opportunities
- Content on major healthy lifestyle issues
- User generated content (e.g. chat rooms, forums, blogs)
- User registration for personal updates via e-mail and SMS

During the Early Adopter Programme, the service will primarily focus on supporting healthy lifestyle choices on physical activity, diet and alcohol. The full range of health improvement information, advice and support (including smoking, sexual health and mental health) will be included at national roll out.

Evaluation

We will be working with an academic partner both to develop appropriate methodologies and to carry out the evaluation of the Early Adopter programme. We have no expectation of being able to measure sustained behaviour change or improved health outcomes during the period of the Early Adopter Programme. However, we do expect the evaluation to cover the following indicators:

- Increased knowledge of healthy lifestyles and risk factors
- Attitudes to health
- Sense of wellbeing
- Planned behaviour change
- Intention to use services
- Action taken
- Stakeholder attitudes

Stakeholder engagement

A programme of national stakeholder engagement for NHS Health Direct commenced in October 2006. One to one meetings have been held with a range of stakeholders including BMA, Royal College of GPs, Royal College of Nursing, Royal College of Psychiatrists, NHS Confederation, Faculty of Public Health and Royal Institute of Public Health, as well as patient organisations and trade unions. Stakeholders have been very positive in their initial reaction to Health Direct. In particular, they welcome the approach of testing the service in an Early Adopter site prior to roll out on a national scale.

We look forward to continuing this commitment to stakeholder engagement at a local level within the Early Adopter site, once identified.

Priority for Early Adopter site

Ideally we are seeking a site for the Early Adopter Programme which provides *both*:

- an area with health inequalities *and*
- communities with characteristics more typical of the general population

This suggests a Spearhead PCT/local authority with health challenges and inequalities, with a neighbouring area with a wider social mix. This may mean two neighbouring PCTs, ideally including both urban and rural areas.

It would also be an advantage if the community has already established a health trainer programme.

Resourcing

The Early Adopter PCT(s) will not receive direct funding but neither will there be any cost to participating in the early development of NHS Health Direct. All costs including marketing, stakeholder engagement, and service provision will be met from the NHS Health Direct budget provided to NHS Direct by the Department of Health.

Timetable

The Early Adopter Programme will commence at the latest by October 2007, and, if possible, by end of July 2007. The Early Adopter Programme will run for six months with evaluation running coterminous with the operation of the service.

Expressions of interest

Strategic Health Authorities are invited to suggest PCTs in their locality which might meet the criteria above and where there is likely to be local enthusiasm for the NHS Health Direct concept.

Expressions of interest should be received by **Friday 9 February 2007**

For further information contact:

Bob Gann
Project Director, NHS Health Direct
Email: bob.gann@online.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
Tel. 01489 773722

Andrew Fenton
Head of Design & Operations
andrew.fenton@nhsdirect.nhs.uk
Mobile. 07787 772537