

## NHS Health Check support programme

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Dear Colleague,

As you know, responsibility for commissioning the risk assessment element of the NHS Health Check transfers to local authorities in April 2013 as part of their wider responsibilities for public health. Directors of public health are currently managing arrangements for the successful transfer of NHS Health Check contracts. It is proposed that the NHS Health Check will be a mandatory public health service which local authorities will be required to commission.

The Department of Health (DH), NHS Diabetes and Kidney Care (which supports implementation of the NHS Health Check) and the Local Government Association (LGA) have agreed that there needs to be a programme of information and support to local authorities in taking up this new responsibility. This letter provides a brief overview of what is involved in commissioning and delivering the NHS Health Check. It also sets out the actions we are proposing to undertake jointly through the support programme, and invites your views on these proposals. In addition to our proposed support set out in this letter, Public Health England, which will take on responsibility for supporting delivery of the NHS Health Check from April this year, is undertaking an assessment of the support required in future. The details of this assessment will be made available once complete.

### Overview of NHS Health Check

The NHS Health Check identifies people who are at risk of developing the preventable illnesses of heart disease, stroke, diabetes or kidney disease, and helps them to avoid or delay these conditions. This is a national scheme in which everyone between the ages of 40 and 74 who has not been diagnosed with any of these conditions will be invited for an NHS Health Check once every five years. The risk assessment element takes about thirty minutes and involves questions regarding family health history, and checks, such as weight, blood pressure and cholesterol. The results are discussed with the individual, and personalised advice is given on how to lower their risk through developing a healthy lifestyle. Some people may need further tests and some will be started on medication such as statins.

Currently the majority of NHS Health Checks are provided through GP practices, but local authorities will be free to commission the risk assessment element from other providers. Following an NHS Health Check people may need access to medical treatment, and/or to lifestyle support. It therefore requires a partnership between local authorities, clinical commissioning groups and other local stakeholders to ensure that a systematic, integrated approach is in place.

The NHS Health Check brings significant benefits to individuals, with the potential to prevent up to 1,800 strokes and 9,700 cases of diabetes each year. It also results in savings; it is estimated that savings to the NHS budget nationally could be around £57 million over four years, rising to £176 million over a fifteen-year period. The level of savings to adult social care and to the national economy through reduced illness, sickness absence and benefit payments will be the subject of

future financial modelling.

### **Programme of information and support**

The NHS Health Check support programme, run by NHS Diabetes and Kidney Care, has operated since April 2009. Its resources are now being updated to reflect the transfer to local authorities and prior to the transfer of the support role to PHE. Some of the measures proposed are outlined below:

- NHS Health Check has a [dedicated website](#) which was designed mainly for public health practitioners responsible for local commissioning. We are developing the website further so that it has information relevant to local authorities and interested stakeholders.
- Local ownership of the NHS Health Check is vital. The website already has a map of performance which shows health check offers made and taken up in PCT areas, and this is being amended to reflect local authority boundaries so that local authorities can identify and benchmark performance.
- The website includes some excellent examples of how the NHS and local authorities are already working together on NHS Health Checks and we intend to build upon and continue to share these.
- We intend to run a series of events across the country so that councillors and other local authority representatives can learn more about the NHS Health Check programme.
- We are developing a resource for health overview and scrutiny committees with the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS).

We also hope to set up a reference group of local authority councillors and officers to advise on developments. If you are interested in being involved in a reference group, which would involve only a small time commitment, please contact the LGA by emailing [Liam.Paul@local.gov.uk](mailto:Liam.Paul@local.gov.uk).

A briefing pack with more detailed information about the NHS Health Check will be circulated to local authorities and health and wellbeing boards later this month. The DH is also revising the NHS Health Check programme guidance to ensure this takes account of the new arrangements for public health and other changes. This will include setting out issues to do with the branding of the programme and any recommendations about the future use of the term 'NHS Health Check', which has been useful in helping identify it as a service free to the general public and distinguishable from health checks offered by companies for a fee.

Local authorities and health and wellbeing boards that have not already done so are encouraged to familiarise themselves with how the NHS Health Check programme is being transferred in their areas.

If you would like more information about the NHS Health Check programme or wish to make contact with the team, please visit our website [www.healthcheck.nhs.uk](http://www.healthcheck.nhs.uk).

Yours sincerely,

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