



Health
Protection
Scotland

NHS
National
Services
Scotland

Health Protection Scotland

Protecting Scotland's Health



About Health Protection Scotland

Health Protection Scotland (HPS) was established by the Scottish Government in 2005 to strengthen and co-ordinate health protection in Scotland.

We plan and deliver effective and specialist national services which co-ordinate, strengthen and support activities aimed at protecting all the people of Scotland from infectious and environmental hazards.

We do this by providing advice, support and information to health professionals, national and local government, the general public and a number of other bodies that play a part in protecting health.

HPS is a division of NHS National Services Scotland which works at the very heart of the health service across Scotland, delivering services critical to frontline patient care and supporting the efficient and effective operation of NHS Scotland.

HPS is organised into three specialist groups with expertise provided by a multi-disciplinary workforce, which includes doctors, nurses, scientists and information staff, all of whom are supported by core business and IM&T teams. The specialist groups are:

- Healthcare Associated Infections & Infection Control
- Blood Borne Viruses, Sexually Transmitted Infections, Immunisation, Respiratory & Vaccine Preventable Disease
- Gastrointestinal and Zoonoses, Travel and Environment and Health



HPS in the Health Protection Community

Our effectiveness depends on how well we link with the many key stakeholders in health protection.

These fall into four categories:

- local NHS boards
- other special NHS boards with national responsibilities
- other organisations with Scotland or UK-wide remits which overlap with health protection, and
- UK and international health protection partners.

What we do

We carry out surveillance, working with NHS professionals and local authorities in a variety of ways, to gather health intelligence and data, detect emerging trends and work to prevent infections and hazards, or reduce the effects of these if they do occur.

We monitor the extent and impact of infections and other risks to Scotland's health and help prepare plans to manage incident or outbreaks, particularly those, like pandemic flu, that may stretch the resources of the NHS in Scotland.

And we aim to communicate effectively with health professionals and the Scottish people to promote the steps needed to stop the spread of infections and other hazards.



Co-ordinating national health protection

HPS is responsible for co-ordinating the management of incidents and outbreaks which affect the whole country, multiple NHS boards or which have a significant impact in one NHS board area.

We are responsible for taking forward specific health protection programmes which look at, for example, healthcare associated infections (HAI), vaccine preventable diseases and prevention of sexually transmitted infections.

We promote a consistent Scotland-wide approach to health protection, including developing information and knowledge management systems for use across NHS boards and HPS. Acting upon the information we gather through our surveillance of health problems enables us to work in partnership with NHS boards, the Scottish Government and other key stakeholders, to reduce the risks to the people of Scotland.

Monitoring health hazards for the people of Scotland

HPS is the national surveillance centre for communicable diseases and the health problems associated with environmental hazards.

Surveillance information is provided to HPS through an extensive surveillance network which encompasses laboratories, hospitals, GPs, NHS boards and local authorities.

HPS also contributes surveillance information at a UK and international level through close collaboration with these specialist agencies.

HPS is responsible for commissioning the NHS specialist microbiology and laboratory services. An outcome of our close working relationship with laboratory services has been the ability to support the formation of new services to meet specific threats – for example a new reference laboratory service which handles *Clostridium difficile* was established in late 2007.

Responding to emergencies

We work closely with emergency planning partners in Scotland, including:

- Scottish Government
- NHS boards
- local authorities
- police
- fire brigade
- ambulance services, and
- the UK devolved administration health protection agencies

to make sure that we are prepared to deal with outbreaks and incidents which are likely to severely test the NHS and other public services. This includes infectious hazards and bio-terrorism.

We also advise the Scottish Government in its overall strategic management of such incidents. Part of our role is to make sure that there are arrangements in place to support NHS boards which may be overwhelmed with a public health incident such as a large outbreak of infectious disease and to take the lead in communicating urgent health alerts to the service.



Raising standards

Our aim is to ensure that everyone working in health protection across Scotland is working to the highest standards of quality and practice at all times. We work closely with our partners to make sure that both HPS and NHS boards have systems in place to deliver health protection services such as surveillance, the management and communication of risk, and outbreak management.

We report on these issues to the Scottish Government and the Health Protection Advisory Group (HPAG).

We also provide co-ordination and support for the Health Protection Network, which operates in a similar way to a Managed Clinical Network, promoting good professional practice and developing national topic specific, guidelines for implementation across health protection services in Scotland.

Research and development

We are committed to investing in research and development activities. We work with academic and other partners to identify existing gaps in knowledge and develop and implement research projects to meet specific needs.

Expert advice

Our role includes bringing together the best expert knowledge in Scotland, which enables us to provide impartial advice on health protection issues to health practitioners throughout Scotland as and when they need it.

We also advise the Scottish Government on national policy and respond to parliamentary questions.

Developing a competent workforce

We work with partners, but particularly NHS Education Scotland (NES), to assess the skills and knowledge needed for health protection professionals, especially in key areas, such as public health and environmental health.

Together we identify the most appropriate education and training methods that meet the needs of the workforce and ensure that these are provided both locally and nationally. In areas where it is not cost effective for Scotland to have its own specialist workforce, we form and utilise links with other UK and international bodies.

In 2006 HPS and NES jointly launched the 'Framework for Workforce Development for Health Protection in Scotland' with the aim of providing Boards in particular with the key areas on which education and training activity in health protection should focus.

Structure, accountability and governance

HPS is led by the Director and Medical Director supported by a Senior Management Team which includes the Heads of Group and senior operational managers.

HPS is accountable to the Chief Executive and Board of NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) and works within the overall governance structures of NHS Scotland.

Health Protection Advisory Group

The Health Protection Advisory Group remit is to set the strategy and identify priorities in health protection in Scotland. The group also monitors the health protection work undertaken by HPS and others. The Group includes representatives from NHS boards, local authorities, HPS, other national organisations with an interest in health protection, and relevant professional and staff bodies. The Group assists and supports the Chief Medical Officer for Scotland in health protection matters.





The future

We are continually assessing threats to health and increasing our understanding of the epidemiology of current and emerging diseases and environmental challenges.

We know that service-wide preparedness for major incidents and outbreaks is critical to an integrated, sustainable, nationwide response and recovery capacity.

We understand that environment and health are linked and that sometimes the places where people live, work, learn, and play can impact on their wellbeing – especially in disadvantaged communities.

We will continue to act on what we know, ensure we are prepared to deal with the unexpected, and work together with all our stakeholders to translate our knowledge into advice, guidance, leadership and co-ordination activities that will better protect the people of Scotland.

Health Protection Scotland

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