

News Release



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For immediate release

Foundation Trust Consultation Launched Today

NHS Direct is today launching a 16-week public consultation on its plans for the future, prior to applying to become an NHS Foundation Trust.

Now in its seventh year of national operation, NHS Direct is a world leader in the delivery of telephone and web-based healthcare, with over 28 million contacts a year.

Launching the public consultation, Matt Tee, NHS Direct Chief Executive said: "This is an exciting time for the organisation. Being part of the NHS has always mattered a great deal to NHS Direct. Foundation Trust status will enable us to work more closely with the broader NHS to ensure that our services are better integrated with theirs so that patients receive a seamless service no matter where they start their 'health journey.'

"As a service that is able to reach into the home, through the web, telephone, text or TV, our FT membership presents us with the opportunity for a live and dynamic dialogue with members. We intend to benefit from this dialogue to improve the services we offer, making them more effective for users and attractive to the broader public."

Over the next three years NHS Direct plans to develop a number of new services – many of which will be developed in partnership with other NHS services or companies working in health.

Over the next four months, events up and down the country will be held for staff, stakeholders and the public to hear more about NHS Direct's vision, strategy and future plans and will provide the opportunity for them to share their views. A national stakeholder conference is planned in London on 21 February 2008. NHS Direct hopes that as many people as possible will take part in the consultation process.

Membership is open to all English residents over the age of 16. With the exception of those on short-term contracts, all staff will automatically become a member unless they choose to opt out.

The new NHS Direct Foundation Trust will have a Council of 29 Governors to represent the views of members, drawn from the public, staff and stakeholders.

Ends

For press enquiries please contact: Ann Grain on 0207 599 4223; 07876 596 932.

Notes to editors:

- You can view a summary version of our consultation document and download a copy of the full version on our website at www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/foundationtrust. You can also feedback your comments on our proposals online too.
- Anyone interested in becoming involved, who is over 16 and resident in England, should either apply online (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/foundationtrust/membership) or complete the application form at the end of the consultation document.
- In April 2004, NHS Direct moved from 22 different business units to become a single, national organisation – the NHS Direct Special Health Authority. Following the Arm's Length Bodies review, NHS Direct became an NHS Trust on April 1, 2007 and is now seeking to become a NHS Foundation Trust by June 2008.
- NHS Direct offers a unique source of comprehensive and trustworthy advice and information over the telephone, on the internet and via digital TV. Apart from helping millions of people to manage their own health, where appropriate, we help patients to access face-to-face care. We also provide ongoing care to patients with long-term conditions and deliver a variety of other services to support our NHS partners.
- NHS Direct handles over 22,000 calls a day. That's over 8 million calls a year
- The NHS Direct Online (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) receives about 21 million visits a year
- NHS Direct Interactive is available to about 17.2 million households with either Sky Digital TV or Freeview, 68% of all TV homes. NHS Direct employs over 3,000 staff - over 1,200 are trained nurses
- NHS Direct receives approximately £150 million funding annually from the Department of Health to run the 0845 4647 telephone service, the website and digital TV services