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HEALTH CIRCULAR  
LOCAL AUTHORITY CIRCULAR

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY



To: London Borough Councils )  
Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan )  
District Councils )  
The Common Council of the City of London ) for action  
Port Health Authorities )  
Area Health Authorities )

Public Health Laboratory Service Board )  
Regional Health Authorities )  
Boards of Governors ) for information  
Community Health Councils )

February 1980

HEALTH SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

CO-ORDINATION OF EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SERVICES FOR COMMUNICABLE  
DISEASES AND FOOD POISONING: COMMUNICABLE DISEASE SURVEILLANCE CENTRE

SUMMARY

This circular sets out the arrangements in England and Wales for the co-ordination of epidemiological services for communicable diseases and food poisoning.

1. The report of the Cox Committee on the smallpox outbreak in London in 1973 recommended that, in a smallpox outbreak, DHSS should establish a "highly active information and co-ordination centre ..... equipped with the means of rapid accurate communication with all Medical Officers of Health who may be involved ..... to maintain close co-ordination between public health areas involved in controlling the outbreak and to provide advice and information from DHSS". This recommendation was accepted in principle, and the decision taken to apply it to the surveillance and control of communicable disease in general.
2. Accordingly the Public Health Laboratory Service Board was asked to institute and administer, on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Security and the Welsh Office, a co-ordinating centre and expanded information service. This centre is called the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (CDSC) and the address and telephone number are:-

The Director  
Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre  
61 Colindale Avenue  
London NW9 5EQ

Tel. 01 200 6868 at any time.

FUNCTIONS OF THE CDSC

3. The Centre's main functions are:-

Surveillance and Control of Outbreaks

a. CDSC exercises responsibility on behalf of the Chief Medical Officers (of the Department of Health and Social Security and the Welsh Office) for those duties relating to surveillance and advice on control of outbreaks which were formerly undertaken by medical officers in DHSS, except for International Health aspects which will remain with DHSS (see 4(d) below). It responds to requests for advice, in collaboration with PHLS and hospital laboratories, co-ordinates control measures in an outbreak involving a number of districts, and is able to give assistance to MOsEH particularly in serious incidents.

## Information

b. CDSC compiles and distributes the Communicable Disease Report (CDR) as part of a comprehensive information service for communicable diseases. The Centre is also responsible for the informal exchange and dissemination of epidemiological information on communicable diseases. Information systems in this field will be kept under review.

## Teaching

c. CDSC participates in training programmes for community physicians and others involved in the control of communicable diseases.

4. In addition to the staff of CDSC based at Colindale, there are other epidemiologists associated with CDSC currently based in the PHLS laboratories at Oxford and Manchester.

## CHANGES IN PRACTICE

5. Medical Officers for Environmental Health, Port Medical Officers and Chief Environmental Health Officers should note the following:-

a. When taking action in accordance with the Public Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 1968 (as amended), Regulation 6(2) and (3) and Regulation 10, in addition to informing the Chief Medical Officer for England or Wales as appropriate, Medical Officers for Environmental Health should also inform the Director, CDSC, at the address given in paragraph 2 above.

b. In cases where it is necessary to seek direction under provision of the Public Health (Ships) and (Aircraft) Regulations 1970 (as amended) concerned with tracing, removal, surveillance, isolation or detention of persons, disinfection or disinsecting or the declaration of an infected place, Medical Officers for Environmental Health should contact the CDSC.

c. Medical Officers for Environmental Health and Port Medical Officers who, in the exercise of their 'proper officer' functions, need information on communicable disease or advice on outbreak control should apply to the CDSC.

d. The International Health Division at DHSS retains the responsibility for international notification procedures to the World Health Organisation in discharge of UK duties under the International Health Regulations.

e. The CDSC is not responsible for advice on matters such as vaccination and immunisation, hospital accommodation for infectious diseases, control of movement of foodstuffs, interpretation of official memoranda and for general policy, which remain with DHSS.

f. Important information on communicable disease matters continues to be conveyed through the medium of letters from the Chief Medical Officers.

6. As implied in paragraph 5a. above, the reporting to the CDSC of outbreaks of food poisoning is in addition to the reporting to CMOs of serious outbreaks, as required by Regulation 6(2) of the 1968 Regulations. The Department of Health and Social Security and the Welsh Office will, however, remain responsible for co-ordinating action to control the movement of foodstuffs suspected of transmitting food poisoning. The Department (telephone number 01 407 5522 Ext [GRO-C]) or the Welsh Office (telephone number Cardiff (0222) 44151 Ext 3 [GRO-C]) should be notified of suspect foodstuffs which are imported or which have been widely distributed.

## ACTION

7.1 Chief Executives of local authorities and Clerks of Port Health Authorities are asked to make copies of this circular available to Medical Officers for Environmental Health, Port Medical Officers and Chief Environmental Health Officers as appropriate.

7.2 Area Health Authorities are asked to make copies of this circular available to all those concerned.

## FINANCE

8. The arrangements set out in this circular are already in operation and no additional manpower or cost implications are involved.

## From:

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Tel. 01 407 5522 Ext 7372

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Further copies of this circular may be obtained from DHSS Health Publications Unit, Archives Registry, Brunswick Street, Nelson BB9 0HU, quoting serial number appearing at top right-hand corner.