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**GUIDANCE FOR NHS STAFF ON RELATIONS WITH THE
PUBLIC AND THE MEDIA PUBLISHED**

Sir Duncan Nichol, Chief Executive of the NHS Management Executive, today published new advice to NHS staff on their right to speak out on concerns about health care.

Sir Duncan said: "It is important that we encourage a climate of openness and dialogue within the NHS where the free expression by staff of their concerns are welcomed by managers as a contribution towards improving services. However, this must be done reasonably and with proper regard to principles of confidentiality of patient information and also confidentiality to the employer, which the guidance explains.

"The guidance provides a framework within which local procedures to resolve differences can be developed in consultation with staff and their representatives."

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The guidance does not replace extant guidance on statutory complaints procedures or professional codes of conduct, nor does it in any way affect current contractual rights to speak and write or restrict the publication of clinical or scientific research findings.

2. The original draft guidance was issued for public consultation in October last year, to which a large number of constructive responses were received from different organisations.

3. Virginia Bottomley, Secretary of State for Health, today announced publication of *Guidance for staff on relations with the public and media*, in response to a Parliamentary Question from Roger Evans MP (Monmouth).

(ENDS)