

Principles

1. Principles that guide the NHS

Seven key principles guide the NHS in all it does. They are underpinned by core NHS values which have been derived from extensive discussions with staff, patients and the public.

The NHS provides a comprehensive service, available to all irrespective of gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief. It has a duty to each and every individual that it serves and must respect their human rights. At the same time, it has a wider social duty to promote equality through the services it provides and to pay particular attention to groups or sections of society where improvements in health and life expectancy are not keeping pace with the rest of the population.

- 1. Access to NHS services is based on clinical need, not an individual's ability to pay.** NHS services are free of charge, except in limited circumstances sanctioned by Parliament.
- 2. The NHS aspires to the highest standards of excellence and professionalism** - in the provision of high-quality care that is safe, effective and focused on patient experience; in the planning and delivery of the clinical and other services it provides; in the people it employs and the education, training and development they receive; in the leadership and management of its organisations; and through its commitment to innovation and to the promotion and conduct of research to improve the current and future health and care of the population.
- 3. NHS services must reflect the needs and preferences of patients, their families and their carers.** Patients, with their families and carers, where appropriate, will be involved in and consulted on all decisions about their care and treatment.
- 4. The NHS works across organisational boundaries and in partnership with other organisations in the interest of patients, local communities and the wider population.** The NHS is an integrated system of organisations and services bound together by the principles and values now reflected in the Constitution. The NHS is committed to working jointly with local authorities and a wide range of other private, public and third sector organisations at national and local level to provide and deliver improvements in health and well-being.
- 5. The NHS is committed to providing best value for taxpayers' money and the most effective, fair and sustainable use of finite resources.** Public funds for healthcare will be devoted solely to the benefit of the people that the NHS serves.
- 6. The NHS is accountable to the public, communities and patients that it serves.** The NHS is a national service funded through national taxation, and it is the Government which sets the framework for the NHS and which is accountable to Parliament for its operation. However, most decisions in the NHS, especially those about the treatment of individuals and the detailed organisation of services, are

rightly taken by the local NHS and by patients with their clinicians. The system of responsibility and accountability for taking decisions in the NHS should be transparent and clear to the public, patients and staff. The Government will ensure that there is always a clear and up-to-date statement of NHS accountability for this purpose.

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