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INFECTION PREVENTION IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY - WOODWARD

An action plan to reduce and control the spread of healthcare associated infections has been launched by Health Minister Shaun Woodward.

The three-year plan will require Trusts to introduce a hand hygiene campaign based on the World Health Organisation Hand Hygiene guidelines. Surveillance programmes will be established to help identify problems and ensure that the spread of infections is contained. Mandatory training will be introduced.

The action plan was launched at a major international conference on infection control entitled 'Changing the Culture' which was attended by international and local experts in the field of infection control.

During the conference, the Chief Medical Officer for England, Sir Liam Donaldson, acting in his capacity as Chair of the World Alliance for Patient Safety, was presented with a pledge signed by Mr Woodward. The pledge confirmed the Minister's commitment to the World Health Organisation's Global Patient Safety Challenge. By signing the pledge, the Health Minister has committed Northern Ireland to promoting the highest standards of practice to reduce the risks of healthcare associated infection.

The Minister said: **"Healthcare associated infections cause considerable suffering and yet in many cases can be avoided. I want to see action taken to reduce the impact on patients using our health service.**

“I want to ensure that Trusts have robust control systems in place with the implementation of Trust Infection Reduction Plans. However, it is everyone’s responsibility to improve hygiene standards throughout the health service including hospital staff, patients and the general public.

"It is reassuring that some healthcare associated infections are showing signs of a decrease but we cannot be complacent. Improved surveillance is one of the major objectives of this plan providing the health service with better mechanisms to assist with monitoring levels and types of infection."

Sir Liam Donaldson said: “The Global Patient Safety Challenge is a core element of the Alliance’s work. The support of the Minister and Northern Ireland is an important contribution to the promotion of the message contained in the Challenge.”

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Changing the Culture: an action plan for the prevention and control of healthcare associated infections in Northern Ireland 2006-2009 is available on the Department’s website at http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hcai_action_plan.pdf
2. As part of the overall drive to improve safety and quality of care and treatment, DHSSPS will shortly publish its Safety Framework and Action Plan which aims to draw together key components to promote service user and staff safety and includes a two-year action plan to promote sustainable improvement.
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