

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES  
AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

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**TOPIC: THE DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety was established by the Departments (NI) Order 1999. The Department has three main business responsibilities:

- **Health and Personal Social Services**, which includes policy and legislation for hospitals, family practitioner services and community health and personal social services;
- **Public Health**, which covers policy, legislation and administrative action to promote and protect the health and well-being of the population; and
- **Public Safety**, which includes responsibility for the policy and legislation for the Fire Services and emergency planning.

The Department's mission is to improve everyone's health and social well-being. It does so by ensuring the provision of appropriate health and social care services, both in clinical settings, such as hospitals and GPs' surgeries, and in the community, through nursing, social work and other professional services. It also supports programmes of health promotion and education to encourage the community to adopt activities, behaviours and attitudes that will lead to better health and well-being.

**The Department's Structure**

The administration of the Department is organised under the Permanent Secretary, Clive Gowdy, into a number of groups and one Next Steps Agency. These are the Planning and Resources Group, HPSS Management Group and five professional

groups, each led by a Chief Professional Officer: Public Health, Medical and Allied Group; Social Services Inspectorate; Nursing and Midwifery Advisory Group; Dental Services Group and Pharmaceutical Advice and Services Group. The Department's Executive Agency is the Northern Ireland Health and Social Services Estates Agency (known as Health Estates).

### **Planning and Resources Group**

The Planning and Resources Group negotiates and has management of financial resources, departmental staffing policy and resources, information and analysis and ICT support and development for the Department and the health and social services bodies. It has responsibility for public safety policies (including ambulance services, fire services and emergency planning), preparation and publication of the regional strategy for health and social well-being, and overall co-ordination of New TSN, equality and Human Rights.

### **HPSS Management Group**

The Health and Personal Social Services (HPSS) Management Group is responsible for the development of policy for a wide range of hospital, community health, primary care and social care programmes for the HPSS; managing the independent contractor services; managing the capital development programme; and providing strategic direction on HR. This involves close working relationships with the four HSS Boards, the Trusts, the HSS Agencies, and the four HSS Councils. The Group is also responsible for setting annual objectives and targets for the HPSS, and for ensuring accountability for the performance management of the HPSS, in delivering efficient and effective care.

### **Public Health, Medical and Allied Group**

The Public Health, Medical and Allied Group, led by the Chief Medical Officer, provides advice and specific medical services for the Department, the wider NICS, and the Prison Service. This Group is also responsible for the public health business area, comprising the Investing for Health initiative; health protection; health promotion; and strategies on smoking, drugs and alcohol.

### **Social Services Inspectorate**

The Social Services Inspectorate, under the leadership of the Chief Inspector, provides advice and support to Ministers, the Department, other Government Departments and agencies in the field of Social Care. An Annual Inspection Programme across a range of services and providers is carried out for the Department and the Northern Ireland Office. The Inspectorate also carries responsibility for policy on social work and social care training and education including the disbursement of postgraduate social work bursaries and other training support funding linked to the PSS Training Strategy.

### **Nursing and Midwifery Advisory Group**

The Nursing & Midwifery Advisory Group, led by the Chief Nursing Officer, is responsible for advising the Department, the wider NICS and the Prison Service on all aspects of policy which affect nursing, midwifery and health visiting, education and services.

### **Dental Services Group**

Dental Services Group, led by the Chief Dental Officer, provides advice on oral health to the Department, the wider NICS and other bodies and agencies. Monitoring of dental treatment provided by general dental practitioners is carried out by the Referral

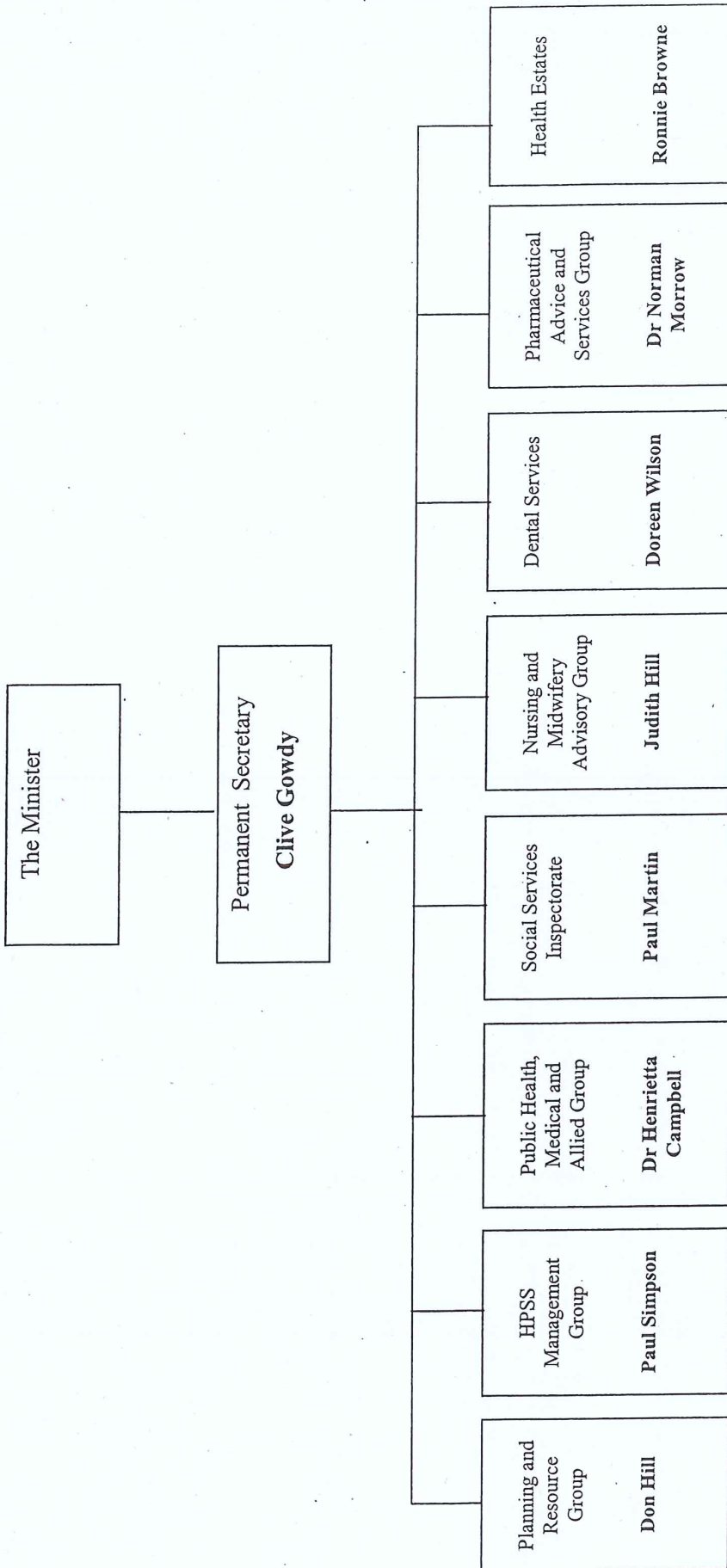
Dental Service. It also delivers direct dental services to the Prisons and Young Offenders Centre.

### **Pharmaceutical Advice and Services Group**

The Pharmaceutical Advice and Services Group, led by the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, is responsible for the provision of specialist advice in respect of medicines and pharmaceutical services. It also has responsibility for medicines legislation, including inspection and enforcement under that legislation pertaining to both human and veterinary medicines.

### **Health Estates**

Health Estates, established as an Agency in October 1995 determines policy on estate issues in relation to the delivery of health and social care. The Agency's task is to provide professional and technical advice, guidance and support on estate matters, at both strategic and operational levels, to the various bodies charged with responsibility for the Health and Social Services (HSS) estate. It also provides a range of executive consultancy services, principally in the disciplines of architecture, mechanical and electrical engineering, quantity surveying and site inspection and manages the contract for the treatment and disposal of clinical waste for the whole of Ireland.



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## **The Department's Associated Bodies**

The four **Health and Social Services (HSS) Boards**, as agents of the Department, commission health and personal social services for their resident populations from a range of providers, including HSS Trusts, and voluntary and private sector bodies.

The **Health and Social Services Trusts** are the main providers of health and personal social services and work within the commissioning arrangements agreed with HSS Boards. They have responsibility for the management of staff and services of hospitals and other health and personal social services establishments. Although managerially independent, Trusts are accountable to the Minister. There are 19 Trusts in Northern Ireland. Some of the Trusts provide hospital services only, some, uniquely in the UK, community and personal social services only, and some, both services. One Trust, the NI Ambulance Service Trust, provides ambulance services for the whole of Northern Ireland.

There are four **Health and Social Services Councils**. These are statutory bodies funded by the Department and independent of the Health and Social Services Boards. They represent the interests of the public and users of health and social services

The **Central Services Agency**, set up under the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 supports the wider HPSS in the areas of Corporate Human Resource and Finance Services, Family Practitioner Services, Legal Services, Regional Supplies, Research & Development, Fraud Investigation and the Northern Ireland Centre for Healthcare and Co-operation (NICARE).

The **Occupational Health Service (OHS)** operates as an NICS-wide body and provides comprehensive occupational health and medical advisory services to Northern Ireland Government Departments and Agencies.



The **Employment Medical Advisory Service (EMAS)** is part of the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland and provides occupational medical advice to the wider business community.

The **Health Promotion Agency** advises the Department on matters related to health promotion and takes the lead in regional health promotion campaigns.

The **NI Blood Transfusion Service Agency** supplies blood and blood products and related clinical services to all hospitals and clinical units.

The **NI Regional Medical Physics Agency** provides scientific, technical and clinical support in the application of physics and engineering to the health care provided by the HPSS bodies.

The **NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency** establishes and maintains a panel of guardians who are appointed by the courts to safeguard the interests of children in proceedings specified under the Children (NI) Order 1995 and the Adoption (NI) Order 1987.

The **Mental Health Commission for Northern Ireland**, an independent body drawn from the legal, medical, nursing, social work and psychology professions, together with lay people is charged with the duty of keeping under review the care and treatment of persons suffering from mental disorder.

The **Northern Ireland Council for Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education** oversees the postgraduate and medical education of doctors and dentists. It is also responsible for the development and delivery of vocational training and continuing medical education for General Practitioners and General Dental Practitioners.