

THE STEWART REPORT

We conclude therefore that it is not possible at present to say that exposure to RF radiation, even at levels below national guidelines, is totally without potential adverse health effects, and that the gaps in knowledge are sufficient to justify a precautionary approach.

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1.20 In the light of the above considerations we recommend that a precautionary approach to the use of mobile phone technologies be adopted until much more detailed and scientifically robust information on any health effects becomes available

1.21 We note that a precautionary approach, in itself, is not without cost (paragraph 6.16) but we consider it to be an essential approach at this early stage in our understanding of mobile phone technology and its potential to impact on biological systems and on human health.

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We recommend that national and local government, industry and the consumer should all become actively involved in addressing concerns about possible health effects of mobile phones (paragraph 6.40).

1.29 We recommend that a register of occupationally exposed workers be established and that cancer risks and mortality be examined to determine whether there are any harmful effects. If any adverse effects of exposure to RF radiation are identified then the Health and Safety Executive should establish a system of health surveillance (paragraph 5.240)

1.37 We recommend that, at national Government level, a template of protocols be developed, in concert with industry and consumers, which can be used to inform the planning process and which must be assiduously and openly followed before permission is given for the siting of a new base station (paragraphs 6.58–6.62). We consider the protocol should cover the following issues.

- All telecommunications network operators must notify the local authority of the proposed installation of base stations. This should cover installations for macrocells, microcells and picocells.
- The local authority should maintain an up-to-date list of all such notifications, which should be readily available for public consultation.

Summary and Recommendations

- The operator should provide to the local authority a statement for each site indicating its location, the height of the antenna, the frequency and modulation characteristics, and details of power output.
- Any change to an existing base station which increases its size, or the overall power radiated, should be subject to the normal planning process as if it were a new development.

1.38 We recommend that a robust planning template be set in place within 12 months of the publication of this report. It should incorporate a requirement for public involvement, an input by health authorities/health boards and a clear and open system of documentation which can be readily inspected by the general public (paragraphs 6.55–6.62).

1.39 We recommend that a national database be set up by Government giving details of all base stations and their emissions. This should include the characteristics of the base stations as described in paragraphs 6.47 and 6.48 and should be an essential part of

the licence application for the site.

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We recommend that an independent random, ongoing, audit of all base stations be carried out to ensure that exposure guidelines are not exceeded outside the marked exclusion zone and that the base stations comply with their agreed specifications. If base station emissions are found to exceed guideline levels, or if there is significant departure from the stated characteristics, then the base station should be decommissioned until compliance is demonstrated (paragraphs 6.53 and 6.54).

1.41 We recommend that particular attention should be paid initially to the auditing of base stations near to schools and other sensitive sites (paragraphs 6.54 and 6.63–6.68).

1.42 We recommend, in relation to macrocell base stations sited within school grounds that the beam of greatest intensity (paragraphs 4.32–4.35 and 6.63–6.68) should not fall on any part of the school grounds or buildings without agreement from the school and parents. Similar considerations should apply to macrocell base stations sited near to school grounds.

1.43 1.43 We recommend that in making decisions about the siting of base stations, planning authorities should have the power to ensure that the RF fields to which the public will be exposed will be kept to the lowest practical levels that will be commensurate with the telecommunications system operating effectively (paragraphs 6.55–6.62).

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If there are currently unrecognised adverse health effects from the use of mobile phones, children may be more vulnerable because of their developing nervous system, the greater absorption of energy in the tissues of the head (paragraph 4.37), and a longer lifetime of exposure. In line with our precautionary approach, at this time, we believe that the widespread use of mobile phones by children for non-essential calls should be discouraged. We also recommend that the mobile phone industry should refrain from promoting the use of mobile phones by children

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1.58 We recommend that a substantial research programme should operate under the aegis of a demonstrably independent panel... This should complement work sponsored by the EU and in other countries. In developing a research agenda the peer reviewed scientific literature, non-peer reviewed papers and anecdotal evidence should be taken into account

Public Information and Consumer Choice

1.61 We are concerned at the variability and the limited extent of the information made available to consumers on mobile phone products.

1.62 We recommend that an Ombudsman be appointed to provide a focus for decisions on the siting of base stations when agreement cannot be reached locally, and on other relevant issues... we recommend that NRPB gives greater priority to the execution of a more open approach to issues of public concern such as mobile phone technology and that it is proactive rather than reactive in its approach.

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1.68 We recommend that public concerns about risk be addressed by NRPB in a more sensitive and informative manner.

1.69 We recommend that NRPB makes more use of specialist time-limited ad-hoc committees of experts and lay representatives to bring forward broadly based well-considered advice.

1.70 We recommend that in a rapidly emerging field such as mobile phone technology where there is little peer-reviewed evidence on which to base advice, the totality of the information available, including non-peer-reviewed data and anecdotal evidence, be taken into account when advice is proffered

PUBLIC CONCERNS

3.7 The health problems most commonly attributed to the use of mobile phone handsets were impairment of short-term memory, headaches, brain tumours, other cancers, sleep disturbance, depression and tiredness. We note that many of the people who attended the public meetings that we organised expressed dissatisfaction with the advice given by NRPB. Their view was that operators should respond to suggestions of adverse health effects even if the evidence was not conclusive, whereas NRPB advises that current exposure guidelines should not be altered until there is “convincing and consistent” evidence of adverse biological effects at lower levels.

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6.57 We recommend that for all base stations, including those with masts under 15 m, permitted development rights should be revoked, and that the siting of all new base stations should be subject to the normal planning process. This planning process should also apply when a change to an existing base station will increase its power output.