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LINKS

PPIF for London Ambulance Service
FTAO Malcolm Alexander
Shaw Trust ST Peter's Centre
Reardon Street
London E1W 2 QH

4th iv 2007

Dear Malcom,

Re: LINKs

Please forgive my slow reply to your letter regarding the above time has not been on our side and the volume of work that our Scrutiny has undertaken has meant that we still have yet to debate the issue of LINKs as a Panel. However, I am writing to you now personally though with observations as Chair of the Panel.

As a result of your letter we initially canvassed other Scrutiny Health panels in London hoping to find that we had a consensus on this matter and that we would be then able to write a joint, and therefore more powerful, letter to the Secretary of State. Unfortunately, this was not so and there seemed a whole spectrum of views out there which, apart from anything else made us reflect on our stance.

We also did a bit more digging and attended several Health seminars, not least the recent LGIU one which focused on LINKs itself. (They said very nice things about the LAS PPIF in case you did not know.) More and more I am left with the conclusion that the disbandment of PPIFs and the establishment of LINKs (there is not the funding for both to co-exist) will be one of the most significant challenges in the management of the NHS in the forthcoming year.

I am in doubt also that LINKs *will* happen – the Department of Health shows no lack of determination in bringing them in – but I hope the constant pressure in negotiations will result in something credible *nationally*. You will see from the attached letter to the Secretary of State what my immediate concerns are: again these are my own rather than those of the Panel.

Being realistic, one's ability to influence things at this level is limited so I shall be concentrating on trying to ensure we have something workable at the local level by having an agreement in place between WMUH, PCT, Council and PPIF

personnel (who I hope will transmute into LINKs and ensure continuity); this would sit on top of the national definition of LINKs making it more apposite for our local situation (and redressing the deficiencies of whatever is imposed nationally.)

I believe that this is vital work – I hope PPIFs will lend their considerable expertise and knowledge to making it happen. LINKs is thrust upon us but I believe we might be able to turn this to advantage in that it gives a fresh start to Public Involvement and the potential to place it on an equitable basis that all parties can sing up to.

Sincerely,

Jon

Jon Hardy
Chair, Adult Health Scrutiny Panel