



ASSOCIATION OF  
**COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCILS**  
FOR ENGLAND & WALES

•*legal services*•*legal services*•*legal services*•*legal services*•

To all CHCs in England and Wales

29 May 2003

Dear Colleague

As you are probably aware, my time at ACHCEW comes to an end this week and soon I will be leaving the UK. I cannot depart without saying thank you.

I have been ACHCEW's legal officer for nearly seven years. In that time I have had the privilege of working with CHC chief officers, staff and members whose professionalism and commitment to the NHS is second to none. You have given me interesting problems to research and resolve and alerted me to novel and topical issues that I have then been able to get my teeth into. Without CHCs, I have no doubt that numerous issues and scandals within the NHS would not have been uncovered and many successful campaigns for improvements to patient services would never have got off the ground. I have loved being involved in all of it.

Thank you too for rallying round a few years ago when the NHS Executive threatened to abolish my post and put legal services out to tender. Although that campaign was successful, sadly the subsequent fight over the abolition of CHC was not. I don't mind telling you now, that I believe we should have campaigned to retain and strengthen CHCs, but that is probably just a reflection of the high regard that I have for the work you have done.

I am leaving the UK at a time when the voices of patients and the wider community have been muted by a government that has demonstrated its complete indifference towards the rights and views of the people of this country. However, I am sure that many of you will continue to fight for change and I certainly intend to continue pressing for greater community empowerment in Canada.

I have loved working with you all I do hope that you prosper personally and professionally.

Goodbye and good luck.

Marion Chester

PS I would be very grateful if you could copy this letter on to your members.