

## **SERACHCs responses to delay in abolition date and response to Urgent meeting request from ACHCEW**

### **SERACHCs will be holding a (final) Full Association Meeting on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2003**

Hi to you all,

I have been out of the office for a few days, and have received the attached document from ACHCEW calling for an urgent meeting with Regional Associations so that they can get a clear handle on the "date shifting" issue. Your response to my earlier email which suggested a meeting in September, was the right timing and course of action to take. Nobody called for an urgent meeting.

I have spoken to the Chairman, and his view is the same - we will have a meeting in September. As you will have seen from an email today from ACHCEW, they have a meeting planned for the 23rd June 2003 with CPPIH and the Minister at which they would like to be able to report the current state of opinion and feeling.

Can I ask that you let me have any comments or suggested action on the attached note from ACHCEW which I will pull together, and share with ACHCEW and yourselves.

Best wishes

**Christopher**

Christopher J Hayes MBA  
Regional Co-ordinator

South East Regional Association of Community Health Councils (SERACHCs)  
Suite 84, 7th Floor  
50 Eastbourne Terrace  
London  
W2 6LX

Tel: 020 7725 2512  
Fax: 020 7725 2808  
Mobile: 07768 357 564

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In view of the latest decision by ministers to extend the life of the CHCs for another three months I think that all CHC staff should be given redundancy automatically. This is because of the way CHC staff have been treated over both in the last three years and particularly at the end of May when we were all expecting our redundancy notices. I think that staff should not be made to "play the game" any longer and take time and effort in applying for "other suitable alternative employment". All CHC staff should be given redundancy as it seems the only fair thing to do in the light all that has happened.....



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Drawing on our experiences so far, we are not convinced that the new set up will be up and running by 1 December, consequently, how can we be sure that this date for 'abolition' of CHCs will not be moved back yet again?

The whole situation appears to be a panic response to the realisation (at last) that there will be a gap between CHCs going and Patients' Forum being set up, let alone functional. There has been no thought at all about the implications of CHCs continuing until 1 December 2003 and I feel that it shows a complete lack of knowledge about what is really happening in CHCs up and down the country. Remaining staff are doing their best to continue to function under difficult circumstances. Locally, we have done our best to keep the Trusts informed about the future arrangements and support them in their quest to involve patients and the public and this has been appreciated, but I suspect now that any respect for CHCs as an organisation is dwindling rapidly. How can we continue to be a part of their future plans other than as a cursory lip service?

There is also the whole issue of ICAS and continuing support to patients who have concerns about the NHS. What are the implications here?

At the end of his statement David Lammy said that *'all CHC staff and members had been sent a letter advising them of the change of arrangements'* as if it was no big deal. Has he any idea of the ramifications of this statement. It might surprise him to know that CHC staff bleed like anyone else. We all have families, responsibilities and/or other commitments. We would all like to be able to make constructive plans for the future, but we are being asked to make life changing choices when the goal posts keep moving, the pitch is made up of shifting sand and we have one arm up our backs!! What an appalling way for the NHS to treat its staff.

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Mike Appleyard, Chair South Bucks CHC considers that September is too late for a meeting of the Association and it should be before then.

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I have tried to elicit from the six Kent CHCs whether or not they wished for an urgent meeting before September about the extended date of abolition.

The COs of four CHCs feel it is important to have a meeting; one said the Chairman of the CHC did not feel a meeting would achieve anything; and I have not been able to contact the sixth CHC.

It seems very unlikely that the new organisations will be up and running by 1 December and it is unfair and unjust to keep prolonging the inevitable (unless, of course, the abolition is rescinded!!!). In addition the Commission will not receive its full funding until CHCs no longer exist.

**Following my email this morning, please note that the CHCs in Kent who said they thought a meeting would be helpful have changed their minds, so you do not have a consensus from Kent for a meeting.**



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both thought that the "wait till September idea" was OK and sensible . I am so busy with everything else (just applied for 2 project managers jobs) However, if people want an earlier meeting we will come if we are free.

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\_\_\_What a changing world we live in!!!

With regard to the suggestion from ACHCEW that there should be an urgent Regional Association meeting, I have raised this with my Chairman and she feels that a meeting in September would be the appropriate course of action.

Have a good weekend

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Having read your earlier email to Christopher on this subject, the subsequent response from Brenda and discussed the situation with my Chairman and Vice-Chairman and other members, we are of the same opinion as her.

I know you are already aware of how I feel about the situation and I am sorry that I too seem to be disagreeing with you on this occasion. I am just conscious of the fact that, despite everything, there are members and staff who still wish to carry on and I feel I must support that view whilst I can.

Shall we talk about it?

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Following up our conversation - just a reminder to include in your regional submission, a comment to the effect that in view of change of abolition date etc, that we are no longer held to ransom over our redundancy, and having to show that we have applied for jobs in NHS. We should now be given the option of going through clearing houses if we so wish to remain within the NHS, or taking our redundancy at the end of our jobs. No more jumping through hoops!

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Is David Lammy still the Minister for Ambulance Services and PPIH or does your memo re. Rosie Winterton mean that she is now the PPIH Minister and Lammy has moved over to other NHS stuff??

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Can you enlighten me on which health Minister will be responsible for the patient and public agenda now that David Lammy has gone. I presume Rosie Winterton as Minister of State at the health department is Melanie Johnson's boss, but I am not sure who will be corresponding with CHCs in the future.

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Thanks for all the emails re this situation of CHC extension. I have now had time to think and to discuss the matter with my Chairman, Bill. I have also trawled all my Members and some have responded. Here in Canterbury and Thanet generally members are content to carry on to December, depending on staff availability of course. Bill accepts, as do Members, that staff have to seek other employment and they are not standing in our way at all. In fact all Members are being very supportive of staff in this difficult time.

In relation to a regional association meeting, Bill is not convinced that one is needed. He would support one if the majority wants it but he is not advocating that one is held. On reflection I think the same.

In respect of issuing an ultimatum to Ministers - I am not in favour, and do not support the statement be added to any letter. Of course I am concerned at the shoddy way we have all been treated but I think the powers that be have got that message and some of them may well agree. Also we are now dealing with new Ministers and Secretary of State. For them to see, as their first encounter with CHCs, an ultimatum, is tantamount to shooting ourselves in the foot. We need to continue to negotiate what is best for us (and the public) in all of this mess, not alienate ourselves, which this course of action could do.

Clearly there is a need for answers to the questions that ACHCEW have posed, such as funding implications and roles post August 31st and it is appropriate to ask such questions.

In respect of the new bodies - I do not share your pessimism over when the new bodies will be in place. It appears that Sharon Grant has committed to getting something in place by 1st December - and I would agree that not all Patients' Forums etc will be up AND fully operational by that time.

However, I think it is quite possible to have gone a long way down the path towards some forums being in place, even only with a core of membership. the timetable for the Local Network Providers seems to support this.

Finally Kathleen, I am sorry to disagree so much with you over this but I have given this all careful thought and discussed it with Bill and concluded that there is nothing to be gained by fighting the decision, more to be gained by seeing what good we can get out of it - for us and the public.

I have tried to ring you - I am happy to discuss with you.

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Any news on the fate of David Lammy in the wake of this cabinet reshuffle?  
Has he been sent off to the Tower, or is his future still rosy?

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Logistically I think it is going to be difficult to organise an Association meeting before 23rd. However I do feel we should be supporting ACHCEW and therefore giving them our views on the issues they are seeking comment. Perhaps the Association office could collate them? Furthermore there may be a 'window of opportunity' to influence all the new Ministers given the enormous mess they have inherited. Perhaps it is time to put a stop on the whole thing and improve the effectiveness of CHCs at much less cost!



What is most apparent and hence all the difficulties in replacing CHCs is that people in the DH have not got a clue how all this works in the 'field' and very little management skills. Furthermore their behaviour towards volunteers who give of their time, staff, ACHCEW and TU is truly unacceptable. Finally patients and the public deserve so much better.  
It is very important that we provide a united front .

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