

To: Malcolm Alexander, ACHCEW

13 June 2003

PATIENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH: STAKEHOLDER MEETING TO DISCUSS TRANSITION ISSUES

The system of patient and public involvement in the National Health Service that will be in place from 1 September provides far greater support for patients than ever before.

At 1 September the programme of work to set up patients' forums will be well underway and the support for them will be in place to provide a one-stop shop for information and advice; the Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health (CPPIH) will be representing the patients voice nationally; local authority overview and scrutiny committees will be scrutinising the NHS; the NHS itself will be carrying out its new duty to involve and consult the public; there will be independent support for complainants; there will be support for patients from PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) in almost all trusts; there will be a national help line set up by CPPIH that will provide advice, information and sign-posting for the public about where to get advice and support; and there will be monitoring of the NHS by the Commission for Health Improvement and by Patient Environment Action Teams.

The Government has been consistent in its drive to ensure accessible and informed support for patients; provide for the independent scrutiny by democratically elected representatives; and, ensure that the views and experiences of patients are fed into decisions affecting their health and health services. Massive progress has already been made.

Following representations from Parliamentarians and other stakeholders, including the CPPIH, we are responding positively to comments around the specific issue of independent monitoring of the NHS during the transition period and have therefore decided to make the position absolutely unassailable by retaining Community Health Councils to continue their monitoring function until 1 December, at which point all patient forums will be in place to take up this role.

Sharon Grant, Chair of CPPIH, has stated that this decision allows an important breathing space to help ensure a smooth handover to the new system of Patient and Public Involvement Forums in December.

Following initial discussions with ACHCEW and others it has been suggested that a one-off stakeholder meeting be held to discuss the best way of managing the transition. The issues to be discussed will be:

- Communications to CHC staff and members and others;
- managing the continued service to the public that CHCs provide;
- how knowledge can be transferred to the new system.

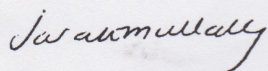
The meeting will be held on Monday 23 June in Room 149 Richmond House, 79 Whitehall, London, SW1A. The meeting will start at 13.30 and finish no later than 17.00. I apologise for the short notice but I wanted to meet with you at the earliest opportunity.

You are invited to send representatives to attend this meeting. In addition to ACHCEW representatives I would appreciate if you would invite 4 CHC members to attend.

Please send details of your representatives to Eileen Exeter, Rm 5C05 Quarry House, Quarry Hill, Leeds LS2 7UE (Tel: 0113 254 6096) or email eileen.exeter@doh.gsi.gov.uk.

I look forward to meeting you on 23 June.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Sarah Mullally'.

SARAH MULLALLY
Chief Nursing Officer