

Our ref : CC/JE

8th September 2006

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Dear Colleague

Today is my last working day in the PCTs and one tinged with some sadness as I take my leave of many colleagues, friends and staff who have over my time here, been very supportive. I also leave with considerable hope, as over the last year or so I have been amazed by the number of people I have met who are willing to embrace change for the benefit of patients. I know that this will be built on by the new PCT as they take our work and shape it even further.

I am very grateful to our staff and NHS contractors for the work they have done to ensure that we have continued to commission and deliver good quality patient care against a very difficult financial background.

So, to the future. As you know, in the last nine months the NHS has been subject to a number of policy changes, including the major reconfiguration of SHAs and PCTs, which concludes on 1st October. These policy changes significantly alter the context in which we work, and the impact of these changes has to be taken into account as we go forward.

During the last eighteen months we have carried out a comprehensive engagement process and delivered a statutory NHS Consultation on Pathways for Change. The Project Board for Malmesbury Redevelopment has met regularly, and continues to meet. The Avon & Wiltshire Partnership NHS Trust (AWP) has consulted on Mainstreaming Mental Health and decisions on these three critical issues are required shortly.

I am mindful of the need for probity and due diligence in respect of decision making on the three key issues above. As your Chief Executive I am firm in my view that it would be inappropriate, in governance terms, for the existing PCTs to make decisions that irrevocably forward commit the new PCT financially. I have therefore in my Chief Executive's paper to the 14th September Board meeting, advised the Boards that decisions on Malmesbury, Mainstreaming Mental Health and Pathways for Change should be made by the incoming PCT.

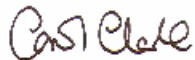
This conclusion is supported by the new Strategic Health Authority who, like us, understands that a delay will inevitably be disappointing for our staff, our stakeholders and the staff of AWP. However, I believe, and I hope that the Boards will agree when

they meet, that a short period of delay is an acceptable compromise that will allow the new PCT time to become familiar with the key issues, fully test these against the policy changes and ensure the final decisions on these crucial changes have broad support.

On a personal level I would have been delighted if I had completed my time here in Wiltshire with a decision having been made on Pathways for Change since one always likes to fully complete what one started! However in advising the Boards as I have, I do so mindful that if I was the incoming Chief Executive it would be important to ensure that this crucial decision, and its implementation, is made by the same organisation. We are fortunate that PCT reconfiguration on this occasion works to support this process and I know that the new PCT will move swiftly, and in a timely way, to reach a conclusion on Malmesbury, Pathways for Change and Mainstreaming Mental Health.

Thank you for your support, challenge and commitment to patient care. I wish each and every one of you good health, luck and a happy future.

With all best wishes,



Carol Clarke
Chief Executive