

First Floor, Valentines
Epsom Square
White Horse Business Park
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 0XG
Tel: 01225 754453
Fax: 01225 754648

Joanne Naylor
Health Scrutiny Officer
Wiltshire County Council
County Hall
TROWBRIDGE
BA14 8JN

23 December 2003

Dear Joanne

Re: Minutes of the County Health Scrutiny Development Sub-Committee meeting held on 26 September 2003

Thank you for your letter of 8 December 2003, in respect of the above. I would, indeed, like to take up your offer of providing a briefing note with regard to the draft minutes of agenda item number 82, to accompany the papers for the next scheduled meeting of the County Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 30 January 2004. Please take this letter as such.

Firstly, I note from the minutes and in particular Resolution number (ii), that the Sub-Committee was advised and noted that further reviews in respect of minor injuries and out of hours services in West Wiltshire PCT would take place. *This is not and has never been the case.* That this 'misunderstanding' has occurred and was permitted to have such an influence leaves me with considerable concern about the process followed by the Sub-Committee in considering matters placed before it.

The papers prepared by the PCT and submitted to both the West Wiltshire Area Health Scrutiny Panel and the County Health Scrutiny Development Sub-Committee do not make reference to any further planned consultation or reviews. Rather, according to agreed process, the papers first seek the Area Health Panel and then Sub-Committee's approval to implement the changes on minor injuries out of hours services on the basis that the PCT considers that its obligations to consult have been satisfied.

It is regretful that it was not possible for a representative of the PCT to have been present at the meeting on 26 September 2003, in order that this misinformation about further consultation/reviews could have been corrected at the time. Nonetheless, I am particularly troubled that information contrary to that contained within the papers for consideration on the day and which was provided from a source external to the PCT, was not verified with the PCT before being taken as material fact.

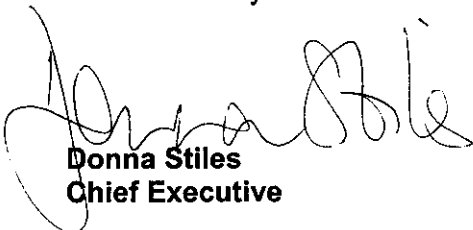
Secondly, I now also understand that, following the meeting of the Sub-Committee on 26 September 2003, some considerable 'play' has been made by a member of the Sub-committee on the Sub-committee's choice of words in resolution (i), namely that the sub-committee "noted" the decision of the West Wiltshire Health Scrutiny Panel that adequate consultation has been undertaken by the PCT, to the extent that I have heard that this does

not mean that the sub-committee endorsed this finding of the Area Health Panel. I have to say that this also leaves me troubled and more than a little perplexed. Either the Sub-Committee at its meeting on 26 September 2003 agreed with the findings of the Area Health Panel, or it did not. I am advised by a representative of the Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Strategic Health Authority who attended the meeting that, at this point in the proceedings, Chris Humphries sought advice from yourself as to whether in endorsing the findings of the Area Panel the sub-committee needed to agree or note the findings of the Area Panel. The conclusion drawn was that, as the Area Panel has agreed the proposals, the Sub-Committee only needed to note the recommendations.

I wish to advise the Committee that the Board of the PCT considered and decided upon the matter of the permanent closure of the out of hours minor injuries services in Melksham and Warminster at its meeting on 6 November 2003 in good faith in light of what we understood to be the conclusion of the considerations by both the Area Health Panel and the County Sub-Committee. I have since discussed this matter again with the Chair of the Area Health Panel and at the meeting of the Panel on 11 December 2003.

I strongly believe that we all need to learn from this episode and move on. I will personally be present at the 30 January 2004 meeting.

Yours sincerely



Donna Stiles
Chief Executive