

Leader of the Council
Councillor R.J. Phillips

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15th September, 2005

Dear Mrs Griffiths,

RESPONSE TO WEST MIDLANDS SOUTH STRATEGIC HEALTH AUTHORITY

“Commissioning a Patient Led NHS”

Thank you for your letter of 26th August, outlining the opportunity to respond to the options being put forward for reconfiguration of SHA, Ambulance Trusts and PCTs.

Herefordshire Council welcomes a move to reflect SHA alignment with Government office regions and the Health Protection Agency.

A larger Ambulance Trust, covering the whole of the West Midlands, is supported if the Herefordshire locality “footprints” and access standards are maintained.

Herefordshire Council wishes to register its strong support for the preservation of the PCT co-terminous with its boundaries. Local service delivery has benefited greatly from the simplicity and convenience and efficiency of these arrangements in commissioning services. The Council would not wish to see any move away from locally commissioned services. The recent ODPM endorsement of a Local Area Agreement proposal makes this a particular priority to sustain.

Therefore, the importance of a sovereign NHS body for Herefordshire is a vital ingredient in the delivery of the Local Area Agreement and in supporting and sustaining a prosperous Herefordshire.

The geographic context of Herefordshire, having a large land mass (840 sq.miles), but sparse population, means the political identity of a co-terminous PCT and Local Authority has greater significance. Indeed, the size of Herefordshire needs to have significant weight in the pre-consultation deliberations.

Herefordshire Council welcomes the link with the White Paper on Health & Care outside hospital and anticipates greater attention to the outcome of the current “Your Health, Your Say” consultation events leading to the White Paper on further deliberations on provider arrangements.



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Early discussions locally in Herefordshire have resulted in support in principle for further exploration of enhancing joint arrangements between the Council and the NHS in Herefordshire for commissioning and improving public health functions.

There are real opportunities to build on the growing partnership between the Council and the PCT to deliver even better outcomes for local people and the Council would wish to explore models of closer working with the PCT, based on co-terminosity.

Of some concern to Herefordshire Council is the proposal on the provision of mental health services. Local integration of service delivery is well advanced, Social Care staff are seconded to Herefordshire PCT, with HPCT having a lead commissioning role for all mental health services, including social care. Any future commissioning and provider re-configuration arrangements should reflect local priorities and current joint arrangements.

Herefordshire Council has led commissioning and provider responsibilities for Learning Disability Services for Health & Social Care. Herefordshire Council would wish to continue this arrangement, which has proved beneficial for service users and carers.

In moving towards a Children's Trust in Herefordshire, the engagement of Herefordshire NHS body is critical to local successful commissioning.

Herefordshire Council would support Option 2.3.4 only given the co-terminosity principle with Local Authority boundaries and the size of Herefordshire and would indicate their concern about the speed of the process.

In addition, it is essential that any impact of these proposals on Welsh Authorities should be tested by including them in the consultation, given the access to Herefordshire NHS services by the population on the borders.

Yours sincerely,

ROGER PHILLIPS
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

STUART THOMAS
CHAIRMAN OF THE HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE