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To: All Leaders of Local Authorities
All Local Authority Chief Executives

Cc: All PCT Chief Executives (via The Week)
All Local Authority Directors of Adult Social Services
All Local Authority Directors of Children's Services
All Directors of Public Health
All Local Authority Directors of Finance

Gateway ref: 15441

Dear Colleagues

Invitation to be an early implementer for health and wellbeing boards

I am writing to invite you to join a network of early implementers for health and wellbeing boards.

On 15 December last year, the Secretaries of State for Health and for Communities and Local Government wrote to you to underline the important strategic leadership role for councils in developing new health and wellbeing boards. The purpose of health and wellbeing boards is to improve health and care services, and the health and wellbeing of local people.

This leadership role for councils is at the heart of the Government's ambition for the future of health and care. Chapter five of *Liberating the NHS; Legislative Framework and Next Steps* emphasises the role of local leadership in driving forward these developments. The Health and Social Care Bill, introduced in Parliament on 19 January, sets out the duties and responsibilities for local authorities, GP consortia, and the NHS Commissioning Board, as they relate to health and wellbeing boards.

Your strategic leadership supports the delivery of the Government's vision for social care in *A Vision for Adult Social Care; Capable Communities and Active Citizens*, and for public health in the *Healthy lives, healthy people White Paper: Our strategy for public health in England*.

The Government's vision is for health and wellbeing boards to drive a genuinely collaborative approach to commissioning. GP consortia and councils' commissioning plans will be firmly underpinned by a shared understanding of the needs of the community, through joint strategic needs assessments, and by a shared strategy

which will best address those needs within the collective resources available through the joint health and wellbeing strategies.

Subject to Parliamentary approval, health and wellbeing boards will be established from 2013, running in shadow form from 2012. 2011/12 will be a transitional year. We think it is a legitimate ambition to work towards shadow health and wellbeing boards being in place in each local authority area in time for April 2012.

By March 2011, joint arrangements need to be in place to manage the transfer of £648m of PCT funding to social care activities benefitting health.

What is the network of early implementers for health and wellbeing boards?

We know that many councils are already considering how to enhance existing partnership arrangements with PCTs in order to lay the foundations for new health and wellbeing boards. We think that it is crucial to learn from developing good practice. Health and wellbeing boards provide an opportunity for a step change in developing integrated working between health and local government. The real challenge is not to establish a board, but in leading cultural and behavioural change to support a joint approach to meeting local need.

The network will be a way for you to develop your approach with other local areas, to share your experiences and learn from each other.

We have worked with an initial group of 25 councils to design the focus and approach of the network, which we expect to develop further over the coming months as more areas join the network.

The network will begin with a focus on some of the big challenges local areas have identified in our early discussions:

- ensuring the potential of these reforms is realised in terms of improved outcomes and integrated working, while retaining good relationships, talent and capacity through the transition
- building new relationships and working practices across in particular GP consortia and councils
- making a success of the new accountabilities, in particular how transparency and accountability to local people can be improved
- making this work across more than one local authority, in two-tier areas, and where GP consortia are not co-terminous with councils
- addressing specific issues, such as joint commissioning and making the right links to children's and wider public services.

We know that we cannot deliver this agenda exclusively from Whitehall – it will be driven by the local councils, health bodies and their partners. Our role will be to hold the agenda together and provide support, working with Local Government Group and strategic health authorities (SHAs). In practice, this means:

- we will tap into existing themed and geographical networks where that makes most sense, or help you set up new ones
- we will help you connect with other areas who have similar or connected interests, provide facilitation for discussions and promote peer challenge
- we will provide practical support to you in producing learning products that you and others can access
- we will set up a web forum to disseminate learning, and link into existing forums such as those hosted by LGG

- we will help to analyse emerging issues and themes, so what you do locally can influence the national approach

We are also working with colleagues in SHAs to link the early implementer network into the GP Pathfinders, for example by ensuring learning is available for GPs and councils in the same place. And we will link to early work on public health and GP Pathfinders for Healthwatch.

How to join the network?

Joining the network needs to be a local choice. We would like as many people as possible to be early implementers, to support our ambition of shadow health and wellbeing boards being in place in every top tier local authority by April 2012.

There will not be a formal selection process. However, we would like early implementers to:

- have sign-up and commitment from the top of the organisation (Leader and Chief Executive)
- be genuinely committed to taking this forward in partnership, particularly with emerging GP consortia and with District Councils, who will have a critical role to play
- be prepared to actively participate in sharing information and learning with other areas.

Next steps

If you'd like to become an early implementer, please write to us, setting out why you are interested in joining the network to earlyimplementer@dh.gsi.gov.uk by 1st March.

If you'd like to discuss this further please do feel free to make use of some of the contacts overleaf who would be happy to talk through any queries or concerns you may have.

I'd like to take this opportunity to pass on my thanks to those of you who have already contributed to designing the approach to early implementers and to all of you who have shown interest and enthusiasm for this to date.

I look forward to working even more closely with you in future and to seeing the benefits your leadership brings to the health and wellbeing of local communities.

Yours sincerely,



David Behan
Director General for Social Care, Local Government and Care Partnerships

Useful contacts

For general queries about the early implementer network please contact the DH local government team

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If you want to talk about work in your region on early implementers and on GP pathfinders please contact the Deputy Regional Directors for Social Care and Partnerships or SHA Directors of Commissioning

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