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3<sup>rd</sup> May 2001

Chris Barnett  
Director of Health and Housing  
Dover District Council  
White Cliffs Business Park  
Dover  
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Dear Chris,

#### **PCTs IN EAST KENT**

I hope that your members have had an opportunity to see the relevant Health Authority papers that discuss the options for PCT configuration – if not, please let me know.

I fully understand your members' views, and there will be an opportunity for more formal response over the consultation period. This Health Authority's main priority is to establish robust, sustainable and effective PCTs, capable of rising to the very demanding challenges of the new NHS agenda. This is about organisations that can flourish rather than just survive. There is a growing body of opinion that current national PCT configuration is unsustainable – many smaller PCTs are unable to operate effectively within the shared management cost constraints of their local health communities, neither are they able to attract and retain good quality staff.

The last thing we want locally is unnecessary waves of reorganisation. However attractive small local PCTs might seem, the prospect of the upheaval of merger within two or three years and the impact that would have on delicate and emerging relationships is not attractive. However, we are committed to ensuring that PCTs have effective links with local government and there are clear principles governing the devolution of budgets to match District Council boundaries.

Your members might also like to consider PCT configuration within the context of the new 'Canterbury Triangle' LSP arrangements. Any PCT is likely to need to become an effective partner in those joint arrangements as well.

Yours sincerely,



MARK OUTHWAITE  
Chief Executive

cc: Peter Huntley

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15<sup>th</sup> May 2001

Mr C Barnett  
Director of Health and Housing  
Dover District Council  
White Cliffs Business Park  
Dover  
Kent CT16 3PQ

Dear Chris,

**Re: Formation of PCT**

Thank you for your letter of the 26<sup>th</sup> April and for sending me the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee.

I fully understand the concern of the Council and their wish for us to review our decision. However I believe that, in addition to the answers that both Mark and I gave to the committee on the day, there have been developments, subsequently, that I believe add weight to our decision to go to consultation on a joint Channel/Thanet PCT.

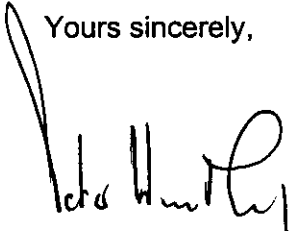
With regard to our desire to form a PCT on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2002 and the issue raised around the speed of change, your members may wish to know the current developments. It is the intention of all PCGs within the South East Region to go to consultation this summer, with a view to becoming PCTs in their preferred configurations on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2002. We must ensure that we do not get left behind, when all others around us are going down the road to be PCTs.

You will also be aware of the Secretary of State's recent announcement of his intention to reduce the number of Health Authorities in England down to 30 by 2004. Based on the population of England that will mean an average HA size of between 1.5 and 2 million. Without knowing what the future configuration will actually be, an intuitive guess can be made that East and West Kent HAs will merge and possibly also include East Sussex to form a new HA. With the future HA being far more remote and focusing on more strategic issues, it is vital that we form strong local organisations that are capable of delivering for our local population. I firmly believe that a standalone Channel PCT would not be able to do so.

I would like to assure the Council that we are also concerned that we avoid the loss of local community focus. We feel that it is important that we continue to deliver at a local level and maintain local responsibility. To that end we are designing a corporate governance structure that will ensure we continue to focus not only on the population as a whole across the PCT but also down to individual locality areas, which will also allow the PCT to continue to be locally accountable.

I hope that you will be able to reassure the members that we take their concerns seriously and that we will continue to work with them to ensure we deliver the best available services to our respective population. If members wish any further updates, in due course, then we would be more than willing to bring them up to speed!

Yours sincerely,



**Peter Huntley**  
**Chief Executive**

cc: Mr M Outhwaite

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