



62 Beechwood Road, London E8 3DY
Telephone: 0207 254 1582

Email: info@health-link.org.uk
www.health-link.org.uk

Strengthening public influence on health

17th January 2006

Patricia Hewitt MP
Secretary of State for Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London SW1A 2NL

Dear Secretary of State

Re: Your Health, Your Care, Your Say Consultation

I have been asked by the members of the North West London Patients' Parliament, which we facilitate on behalf of the NW London Strategic Health Authority, to write a letter to you about the tight timescale given for public engagement in the above consultation.

As you know, public engagement events for this consultation started in September 2005 with all responses to be in by 4th November or earlier if at all possible. As part of this consultation, Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) were asked to seek the views of diverse groups in their areas and to feedback these views by the November deadline.

By giving only 3 months to the SHA, the time available for them to engage with local people with events/opportunities to enable them to collect views was reduced. This extra layer of bureaucracy meant that local people had a very short time in which find out about and attend such events.

Although the consultation technically complied with the Cabinet Office code on Consultations in giving it a three months timescale, in reality it led to an extremely pressurised period for those involved. Many of the members of the Patients Parliament are active community volunteers and need enough notice to arrange their time to attend consultation events, and although they wanted to be part of this consultation they had very little time in which to do so.

The SHA and ourselves organised a consultation event for 17th October which was fairly well attended and the feedback from the event was sent in via email to Opinion Leader Research as requested. However, it is the general feeling of the membership that the Department of Health need to allow more time for consultations if they genuinely wish to involve local people and hear what they have to say.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Manero
Executive Director

Cc Maria Kane, Executive Director of Corporate Affairs, Communications and Partnerships,
NWL SHA



Registered Office: 62 Beechwood Rd. London E8 3DY
A company limited by guarantee in England and Wales
Company No. 4938259