

Telephone: 020 7238 4903

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Re: Working with Health Link

Your ref:

Our ref:

Date: 4th June 2008

Dear Elizabeth

I would like to thank you for the work that Health Link has done in looking at the rural aspects of the Partnership for Patients project.

Defra was first approached about the project in June 2006, when you and Mike Clarke outlined the project to us and suggested that there may be a rural interest. We quickly established that it was a worthwhile project for Defra to be involved in, and we were able to offer some financial and other support to the project.

The way in which the project has progressed has been a positive demonstration of cooperative working between government departments and delivery bodies, brokered by and managed very effectively by you and your staff. You have worked closely with libraries, Primary Care Trusts, GP practices, GPs and administrators and other stakeholders over a wide and diverse geographical area, as well as academics from the University of Loughborough. It has been apparent throughout the project, through regular meetings and updates provided by your team, that the views and contributions of all these diverse parties has been fully reflected as the project has progressed.

The results have possibly not been as we expected at the outset but important to know nonetheless. Take-up of the opportunities to use public libraries to arrange medical appointments has been quite low in both rural and urban areas of the study, though it is also the case that we are still early into a quite transformative process in patient involvement – one which of course Health Link has been closely involved with for some time. Of equal importance to the quantitative data of the project has been the more qualitative evidence that you have gained from the many individuals involved, and this has been very clearly presented in the final reports. It is important for Defra that we encourage robust and credible evidence on service-use in rural areas, and the work of the Partnership for Patients project in Gloucestershire and Derbyshire has provided valuable insights into this.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Scrutton".

Ron Scrutton

Head of Rural Policy

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs



