



11 July 2014

Dear Health and Wellbeing Board Chair

BETTER CARE FUND PROGRAMME TEAM

Helen Edwards and Jon Rouse have written to confirm a number of important developments on the Better Care Fund. This included my appointment as the new Better Care Fund Programme Director, and the establishment of an expanded joint programme team. I am writing now to begin a regular programme of communication, and to set out my plans for working with you to help make a success of the BCF. I would encourage you to share my thoughts with colleagues and partners working on BCF plans locally.

As set out in Helen and Jon's letter, I am heading up an expanded joint team that includes colleagues from NHS England, the LGA, DH and DCLG, working under the leadership of Dame Barbara Hakin, National Director: Commissioning Operations, NHS England, who will take on overall responsibility for the programme. The team, reporting to me, has been brought together to ensure we drive forward progress and provide local areas with the support they need. I have prioritised a number of work areas, in order to take the programme forward with clarity and purpose:

- Establishing a programme management office, which will work to quickly ensure a shared understanding of key deliverables and deadlines – when we have clear dates and deadlines we will share them
- Developing an effective offer of support to local areas to ensure they are fully supported to develop the best plans possible – including how the plans of 'fast track' areas can act as exemplars
- Clarifying a revised, nationally consistent and robust assurance process, including being clear on what is being asked from local areas
- Strengthening communications and stakeholder engagement to ensure that all partners and stakeholders communicate clearly and consistently across the programme

This is a fast-moving programme working to challenging deadlines and I recognise the fluidity recent events have created in the system. To ensure you are kept fully up to date going forward, I am planning to issue a weekly communication to all areas. This will begin next week. If it would be helpful for any colleagues in your area to be included in this communication, please email bettercarefund@dh.gsi.gov.uk with their details.

The recent letter from Helen and Jon confirmed that a revised plan template and guidance will be issued to support the further improvement of plans locally and to underpin the strengthened pay for performance and risk sharing arrangements. I recognise that this will

mean additional work and that we will need to review current timescales, and in this context I am clear that we also need to ensure areas have the time necessary to adequately prepare for implementation from next April.

I also recognise the need to ensure local areas are fully supported to agree and implement ambitious, deliverable plans. I will communicate the next steps on this as soon as I can and in any case before the end of the month. In the meantime, I would like to clarify a couple of specific points that have been brought to my attention.

First, I wanted to clarify arrangements around the areas subject to a “fast-track” process, as announced last week. The aim of this process, which is underway, is to take a sample of the best draft plans and support those areas to further improve the plans ahead of publication of refreshed guidance. These plans have not been approved but have been identified as ones which exhibit strong potential, and which we envisage can provide ‘exemplar’ plans for other areas to use as part of improving their own plans.

Second, I would like reassure you that we will be issuing refreshed guidance that includes further detail on the changes to the risk sharing and pay for performance framework outlined in the letter from Helen and Jon Rouse. This will include more detail on the full range of performance metrics. I appreciate there is a degree of uncertainty over the details of these changes, so I would encourage you to wait for this detailed guidance to fully understand the implications for the BCF planning process.

I look forward to working with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Ridley', with a stylized, cursive script.

Andrew Ridley
BCF Programme Director