



5 August 2005

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Dear Nigel and Mike

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Andrew Foster
Director of Workforce

Thank you for writing to me outlining your thinking on the best way forward for "the minority of staff who will not be assimilated by 30th September". I am aware that this matter was discussed at the Executive of the NHS Staff Council on the 18th July 2005.

I think it important to be clear at the outset that the assimilation target remains at 100% for September and we must not detract from the great progress that many organisations have already made and the determination that others are showing in speeding up assimilation. I am pleased that your letter does not suggest a change to this target. The Department has, of course, already acknowledged that a small number of cases may not be completed by September and has indicated that an assimilation rate of 95% would be acceptable. As you probably know this was communicated in Duncan Selbie's letter to Terry Hanafin and I enclose a copy of that correspondence.

I welcome your helpful comments about the handling of organisations who fail to achieve the September target and we should certainly continue with a partnership approach to this. I would like to consider this further with you when we are clearer on the end of August position.

However, we cannot get away from the fact that the overall average figure of 47.7% assimilation at the end of July masks both excellent and dismal performances on the part of organisations - and we are disappointed in the latter. It is particularly difficult to understand valid reasons why 25 organisations are still at zero percent assimilation, and I am sure that colleagues on the NHS Staff Council are as concerned about this as the DH team. Additionally there is no correlation between the size and scale of this task for a particular organisation and achievement toward the assimilation target, so some acute trusts are progressing well, whilst some PCTs are not.

Learning from Early Implementers, and now from the better performing national roll-out organisations, has shown that the key ingredients are giving this work high priority supported by strong leadership and mature partnership working to enable assimilation to move forward with integrity, following the agreed guidance.

We look forward to addressing any remaining problems with you, and my staff will continue to provide regular update reports on progress of implementation to future meetings of the Executive of the NHS Staff Council, based on SHA submissions. I suggest that we meet at the beginning of September as you proposed to discuss this in more depth.

Yours truly,

Yours sincerely.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Foster', written in a cursive style.

Andrew Foster
Director of Workforce