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Dear Colleagues

### **Mental Health in the North West**

As you know Mental Health has been a priority for NHS NW over the past year with the work of our Commission on Mental Health Services which led to the “*A Better Future in Mind*” report and also the work of the mental health Clinical Pathway Group which was incorporated into our ‘*Healthier Horizons*’ document in May 2008. We have also seen the publication of significant national reports that will have an impact on the NW.

We are keen to maintain momentum and build on the recommendations of those reports and I wrote to people before Christmas to seek views on our proposals for a Mental Health Improvement Programme to be led by the SHA but delivered as a collaborative venture across all key stakeholders in the NW. I am delighted to say that the feedback we received from a wide constituency was very positive and that we are now in the process of setting-up that programme and bringing together representatives of various stakeholders into a governance framework which will direct and oversee its work.

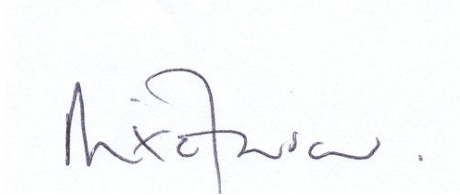
I am also delighted to say that the new Programme Steering Board has had its first meeting and has ratified my recommendation that John Boyington should act as Programme Director. As you know John was the Chair of our Mental Health Commission and as well as having an extensive background in mental health matters he has now developed some critical relationships across the NW and I am sure will carry the confidence of all stakeholders in moving this important work forward.

In order to better coordinate our day-to-day work on mental health as an SHA I have also asked John to assume responsibility for coordinating all mental health issues as lead Director. Individual Directors will still hold responsibility for their portfolios in respect of some aspects of mental health i.e. Performance, Public Health, Workforce etc but I hope that John’s leadership will help us to build an even more coordinated approach across our day-to-day functions and the new Improvement programme.

Given the obvious synergies I have also asked John to assume responsibility for Learning Disability, Offender Health and Drugs for the NHS. In taking this work forward, John will collaborate with David Jones, Deputy Regional Director for Social Care and Local Government Partnerships, Dept of Health North West and Mark Gilman, Regional Director for the National Treatment Agency.

I am sure that John will be in touch soon to outline the early decisions about the Mental Health Improvement Programme but in the meantime please do not hesitate to contact either John or me if you have any immediate queries.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mike Farrar', is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Mike Farrar  
Chief Executive

