

West Kent Primary Care Trust
Wharf House
Medway Wharf Road
Tonbridge
Kent
TN9 1RE

Telephone: 01732 375200
Fax: 01732 362525
our ref: SP/cg/NW/1087

Godfrey Horne, MBE
Chairman
Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Kent County Council
Sessions House, County Hall
Maidstone Kent ME14 1XQ

10 June 2010

Dear Mr Horne

Paediatric Audiology

Thank you for your letter of 28th May 2010 and for your offer of assistance to enable the NHS to continue providing hearing screening in Maidstone.

West Kent Community Health has introduced a significantly improved service; unfortunately, however, practical constraints have limited options to continue hearing screening in Maidstone until suitable permanent facilities are available. As Jane O'Rourke explained at the meeting on 27th May, we have attempted to locate suitable alternative facilities in the Maidstone area and continue to do so. In the meantime we will keep the Committee informed as and when things progress.

As a result of the Department of Health quality assurance visit we were subject to a short timescale in order to ensure significant improvement is achieved by the next visit in 2011. Unfortunately, this timescale meant that extensive consultation at the time was not possible, and we regret that we were not able to share our plans more widely. However, we have engaged with key groups and individuals as described in the attached briefing note, and continue to listen to the views of parents through our patient satisfaction survey.

We are committed to ensuring that children across West Kent receive the same high standard of service, and we believe that the interests of the children of Maidstone are best served by providing a higher quality service from Sevenoaks, Hawkhurst and Gravesend than lesser care in suboptimal premises. We have ensured that home visits will be available where appropriate to mitigate any particular issues where people have significant difficulties reaching one of the new testing centres.

Our decision on the location of these new services was based first on the fact that we are not willing to compromise on quality and also on a range of practical issues. We hope to make this excellent service more local to people in and around Maidstone when we have the opportunity. Until we are able to find suitable facilities, I trust the Committee will be reassured to know that the people of Maidstone have access to a dramatically improved service.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Phoenix". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Steve Phoenix
Chief Executive