

From Ben Bradshaw MP, Minister of State for Health Services and
Minister for the South West



Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2NS

Tel: 020 7210 3000

PO00000233079

The Rt Hon Andrew Mackay MP
House of Commons
Westminster
London SW1A 0AA

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Doc Andrew,

Thank you for your letter of 7 August to Alan Johnson enclosing a report from Councillor Bob Edger, Chairman of the local Overview and Scrutiny Committee about healthcare funding in Bracknell Forest. I am sorry for the delay in replying.

It is for Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in partnership with Strategic Health Authorities and other stakeholders to determine how best to use their funds to meet national and local priorities for improving health, tackling health inequalities and modernising services. This process provides the means for addressing local needs within the health community.

It is for PCTs to ensure that suitable commissioning arrangements are in place to meet the needs of their population. The circulars *HSC2002/007 (Securing Service Delivery: Commissioning Freedoms of Primary Care Trust)* and *HSC 1998/198 (Commissioning in the New NHS)* provide further information.

I would like to reassure both you and Councillor Edger that funding is allocated to PCTs on the basis of relative needs of their populations. Allocations are made on a fair funding formula that directs funding to those areas of greatest need. I am informed that the old Bracknell Forest PCT (now part of the new Berkshire East PCT) did, in the past, receive as an area one of the lowest amounts of funding per head as the population is reported to be relatively young and healthy. However, although the area may not receive the same level of funding as more deprived areas, neither will it be made to subsidise funding in other PCT areas. For the current financial year (2007/08) the PCT has received £467.6million, a six per cent increase in real terms.

When the funding formula was improved in 2002/2003 it was agreed to stage the changes over time. This was to allow PCTs who were "over-funded", according to the new formula, time to adjust their spending levels. The Bracknell Forest area is now at its target level of funding.

I hope this reply is helpful.

With best wishes,



BEN BRADSHAW