

Reply to SPN from Customer Service Centre, Department of Health  
26<sup>th</sup> August 2008.

Dear Mr Bamford

Thank you for your letter of 28 July to Lord Darzi about personal health budgets. As I am sure you will appreciate, Lord Darzi receives a large amount of correspondence on a daily basis and is unable to respond personally to every letter. I have been asked to reply on his behalf.

Lord Darzi was pleased to read that you welcome the piloting of personal health budgets. The Department of Health believes their introduction could help give individual patients greater control over the services they receive and the providers from which they receive those services.

The Department has already engaged with many user representatives and has achieved a fantastic response from groups representing mental health service users. It is expected that a number of the pilot sites will choose to focus on people with mental health problems.

The next few months will see policy officials in the Department working with a range of stakeholders to learn about existing experience of personal health budgets, and subsequently the design and establishment of the pilot scheme. This will feed into a publication expected at the end of this year. At the time of publication, the Department will invite formal expressions of interest for the pilot scheme.

Officials at the Department would certainly welcome your input into this process, and the policy team would like to extend an invitation for you to share early thinking on this scheme. If you would be interested in this opportunity, the policy team can be contacted by email at [personalhealthbudgets@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:personalhealthbudgets@dh.gsi.gov.uk) However, if you are unable to become involved at this stage of the process, officials will be in contact in due course, as the plans are developed.

Your letter also expresses your concern about the Care Programme Approach (CPA). You may be interested to know that refocused guidance on the CPA was published earlier this year and re-emphasises the importance of involving patients in decisions about their own care. The Department continues to regard this as a very high priority for mental health providers and expects that local commissioners will share the same view.

I hope this reply is helpful  
Yours sincerely

Customer Service Centre  
Department of Health