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The Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP
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1st July 2008

Local Area Agreement: Approval

Following the submission of your authority's draft Local Area Agreement (LAA) to your Government Office Regional Director, I am writing to confirm that I have approved the Sandwell Borough Council LAA under section 107 of the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Formal notice of approval is attached at Annex A. I am pleased to include, at Annex B, confirmation of your agreed local improvement targets. This includes the targets that I have designated.

The LAA is the agreement between all those who have an interest in improving services and the quality of life for local people. Negotiations have progressed well over the last few months, resulting in an excellent LAA tackling some of the most difficult and cross-cutting challenges in your area. Your council and your partners have already shown their commitment to the agreement by signing up to the targets in the LAA. Formal approval now signals central government's commitment to the deal whilst also marking the formal end of the negotiations.

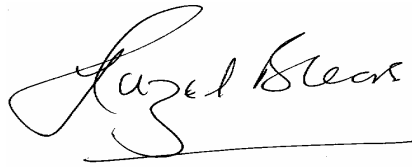
The focus now moves to delivery of the LAA and how you and partners will use it to make a difference to public services and the quality of life for people in your community. I am also keen that these priorities are actively communicated to citizens in an accessible way. With this formal approval of the LAA the "duty to have regard" to targets now applies both to your authority and to all partner authorities to whom the targets relate in your LAA. Final guidance on what the duty means in practice will shortly be available

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/performanceframeworkpartnerships/localareaagreements/>

The next step in the new LAA framework is the annual review later in winter 2008, which will provide an opportunity for all signatories to the LAA to take stock of the arrangements you and your Local Strategic Partnership will have made for delivering the ambitions in the LAA.

The negotiation process has also highlighted where there remain some technical or data issues in relation to specific indicators or targets. We will want to address these with you, including as part of the first annual review and refresh of the LAA. The process for this was set out in *Development of the new LAA framework – Operational Guidance* and we will be providing further information on this in the autumn. Your Government Office will be happy to discuss arrangements in the meantime.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hazel Blears". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

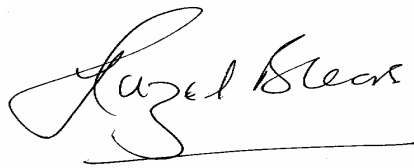
HAZEL BLEARS

ANNEX A

Approval under section 107 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

In exercise of the powers under section 107 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, I approve the Sandwell Borough Council Local Area Agreement.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hazel Bevan". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Dated: 30 June 2008