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Gateway Number: **14458**

29 July 2010

To: Chief Executives
Chairs
Board of directors of Trusts
SHAs
PCTs
Special Health Authorities
Local Authorities

Dear Colleague,

The Olympic and Paralympics Games July to September 2012

As we are all aware, from 15 July to 12 September 2012, the Olympic and Paralympics Games will take place in London and in other parts of the UK. It represents a once in a lifetime opportunity for individuals to get involved and wave the flag for Britain.

The London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympics Games (LOCOG) is responsible for the organisation of the Games and the programme for recruiting volunteers. This programme will begin at the end of July 2010.

Part of the commitment of the successful bid for the Games was the specialised medical and general support and access to volunteers through the NHS. The Department of Health and its partners are wholly supporting LOCOG's need to recruit the most suitably qualified staff and the NHS's need to maintain business as usual.

We request your assistance and support in bringing the volunteering programme to the attention of your organisation. Attached is an important question and answer document that provides further information for all.

Our Olympic Volunteering Advisory Group¹ has developed the following advice about leave arrangements for employees who ask to be released to volunteer for the Games:

As with other volunteering arrangements, staff who want to volunteer for the Games should take paid annual leave in accordance with employees' terms and conditions of employment, (including the carry over of leave from year to year). Employers may also consider other forms of authorised leave in accordance with local policies and practices for volunteering.

A small number of individuals who have unique and rare skills / experience that are not otherwise available in the market place may be requested exceptionally to support the Games for longer than 10 days. Where this occurs, employers are encouraged to consider flexibility in assisting such situations.

This advice has been agreed by the Olympics and Paralympics Health Programme Board, the Olympic Volunteering Advisory Group, the Health Service Resilience Board and the Workforce Leadership Group on behalf of the NHS Management Board. Together they include representation from the trades unions, SHAs and the NHS.

LOCOG will call for volunteers from all parts of the NHS and beyond (including the voluntary and private sectors). All staff will be able to apply to LOCOG to volunteer (details of how to do this will be available on their site www.london2012.com). It will be for employers to authorise such leave and manage staff absence in their organisations.

¹ The Olympic Volunteering Advisory Group consisted of representatives from the Department of Health, NHS Employers, NHS North West, LOCOG, two London health trusts, the Social Partnership Forum, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Assembly and the Northern Ireland Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

You may want to discuss the Olympic and Paralympics Games with your management teams and the volunteering organisations in your own organisation what you need to do to support the volunteering campaign and to ensure your systems and processes are in place to deal with requests for leave over the Games period in 2012.

You will also be aware of the NHS Challenge, supported by Sir David Nicholson and recently launched with the aim of involving 300,000 NHS staff in physical activity by the 2012 Games. The challenge is a response to Dr Boorman's 2009 review of NHS staff health and well-being, which aspires to reduce sickness absence, improve staff morale and provide better care for patients.

The Department and SHAs have been working with sports governing bodies, including LOCOG and Olympian Jonathan Edwards, to develop a package of materials, further detail of which are available at www.sportandphysicalactivity.nhs.uk

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clare', written in a cursive style.

CLARE CHAPMAN

Director General, NHS & Social Care Workforce