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Prime Minister

COMMUNITY CARE: GRIFFITHS' REPORT

I have seen John Moore's minute to you of 29 February about the Griffiths' Report, and I have had some preliminary discussion with him about this. *file with PG*

I am happy that the Report should be published on 16 March as proposed without any substantive government comment at this stage. We can then consider in due course the appropriate response taking account of public reaction to this and Lady Wagner's Report.

As I see it the present arrangements for community care are undoubtedly unsatisfactory and need major reform.

Responsibilities are divided in an inefficient way between various statutory, voluntary and private agencies and there is no proper control of overall resources and costs. The most crucial point in the Griffiths' Report with which I entirely agree therefore is that one body must be given the role of assessing each individuals' needs, and that body should also carry the main financial responsibility for the forms of support which may be given as a result of that assessment so as to ensure accountability.

For my part I see considerable force in the Griffiths' recommendation that this role should be given to local authorities as Roy Griffiths has recommended with full financial responsibility at the margin through the community charge so as to ensure accountability, and subject to important safeguards to prevent authorities abusing their position. The alternative would be to give the role to the NHS or a new Quango, or to central government, but I do not find any of those attractive; and I think it would be very hard to argue for them once the Griffiths' Report is published.

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I appreciate the concern which John Moore and one or two other colleagues have expressed about giving local authorities the lead role in assessment least they respond by expanding their in-house operations and trying to squeeze out the private sector from nursing homes etc. I agree that that is a real danger. I suggest however that we should guard against this by limiting authorities' powers to provide such facilities directly, so that theirs becomes increasingly an enabling rather than a providing role. Insofar as they do have to remain providers, eg of old peoples homes, we should make them subject to the same competitive disciplines as we are applying to many other services provided by local authorities through the Local Government Bill.

There are several other aspects of these proposals which will be of concern to me and my Department. I am not keen for example on the proposal for a big specific grant to ensure that authorities spend the extra resources on community care. This would tend to undermine the discipline of the community charge and the general revenue support grant. I am also very hostile to the suggestion for designating a DHSS Minister to be specially responsible for community care.

No doubt once the Report is published we shall be able to go into all these matters in more detail with colleagues. I should find it helpful if in the first instance there could be a more detailed factual analysis by officials of the basic facts and figures about the different needs and services involved in this area.

I am copying this minute to John Moore, to the other members of E(A) and to Sir Robin Butler.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be the initials "NR" followed by a stylized flourish.

NR

15 March 1988

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