

PRIME MINISTER

NHS: OPERATIONS

You asked whether it would be possible to produce a weekly tally of the number of operations performed which could also be broken down to district level and used accordingly.

DHSS have looked into this and the attached letter sets out their conclusions.

We shall soon be able to provide a more up-to-date figure than the 2.36 million operations in 1985 which we are using at present. During the summer, DHSS will be able, from health authority returns, to calculate the number of operations in 1987/88. That total can be sub-divided of course to provide a weekly figure. For the future, such annual figures will continue to be available a few months after the end of the financial year.

It would be possible to aggregate this information more frequently than once a year, though this would require more work and more staff. More frequently compiled figures would also be more subject to seasonal and other variations.

The conclusions which seem to me to emerge from this are:

- (i) for the future, the new arrangements in place will mean that more up-to-date information is available. Unless the DHSS also believe it will be helpful for management purposes, there does not seem to be a strong case for incurring extra administrative costs in collecting data on operations more frequently than once a year;
- (ii) we need to have information on the number of operations which is - at least - GB-wide. DHSS should accordingly be asked to ensure, with the Scottish and Welsh Offices, that compatible data is collected from them.

Would you be content with this approach?

*MAA*  
MARK ADDISON

31 March 1988

*Yes - Hartigan*

*I did not realise we were quite so far behind in collecting statistics, etc*