

PRIME MINISTER

NHS REVIEW: TIME-TABLE

Following the cancellation of today's meeting of the NHS Review Group, we need to take stock of the time-table for the completion of the exercise.

We have to fit in two meetings of the Review Group, a meeting of E(A) and approval by Cabinet.

Originally we had proposed that the two meetings of the Group would be on 22 December and 5 January, with clearance by E(A) and Cabinet possibly as early as the week beginning 9 January. That would have allowed publication of the White Paper comfortably before the anniversary of your Panorama interview on 25 January.

The only way I can now see of getting publication before 25 January would be a programme as follows:

- next meeting of the Group as already scheduled on Thursday, 5 January; *Yes - the W.P. should be better by that time*
- final meeting of the Group on Thursday, 12 January;
- E(A) on Tuesday, 17 January;
- Cabinet on Thursday, 19 January.

But there are two problems with this:

i. Although we now have a workmanlike first draft of the White Paper there are still difficult discussions to complete in the Review Group, both with the territorial Ministers and the Treasury. If we have only a week between the two Review Group meetings, I fear time may be too tight; and a gap of only five days between the last Group meeting and E(A) is also very short.

ii. The Chancellor has particular difficulties in attending a meeting on 12 January - he has the Autumn Statement Debate that afternoon. He has suggested to me that we bring forward the final meeting of the Group to Tuesday, 10 January, but I think that is an unrealistic time-table.

An alternative time-table would be as follows:

- first meeting of the Group on Thursday, 5 January;
- final meeting of the Group on Tuesday, 17 January, which would give time both for re-drafting and a weekend for you to look at the revised papers;
- E(A) on Tuesday, 24 January;
- Cabinet on Thursday, 26 January.

This would of course preclude publication of the White Paper before the Panorama anniversary. But you could still go for publication on Tuesday, 31 January - ie within the 'by the end of January' time-table that Ken Clarke has indicated publicly.

Richard Wilson and I think this latter time-table would be better. Your demarche a few weeks back has been successful in accelerating the work programme and enabling a lot of progress to be made. But the final stages of the exercise are crucial, and will not benefit from being rushed.

Content for us now to plan on the latter time-table, with publication scheduled for 31 January?

Yes mto

(I will put the papers that were to have been discussed today in the holiday box. If you then wanted to give any reactions over the New Year weekend, we could pass these out in advance of the 5 January meeting.)

PLG6.

PAUL GRAY

22 December 1988

88/474

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SECRETARY OF STATE APPROVES WESTMINSTER AND CHELSEA PROJECT

Kenneth Clarke, Secretary of State for Health has given Approval in Principle for a major new teaching hospital for Westminster and Chelsea.

A new £135 million hospital will be built on the site of St Stephen's Hospital, Fulham. Completion is scheduled for 1992.

Mr Clarke said today:

"This is one of the biggest hospital projects ever approved by Ministers in the history of the health service and will greatly improve health services in this important part of the capital.

"My decision has been made after careful consideration of the strong views made in opposition and support of this project. In giving approval to the new teaching hospital I have also approved the closure of four other hospitals: Westminster, West London, Westminster Children's and St Mary Abbot's. All these have provided excellent health care but they will be replaced by the new hospital and the services will be improved when they are relocated on one site.

"At present maternity services are isolated at the West London, paediatrics at Westminster Children's and geriatric beds at St. Mary Abbot's. Basing all these at the new hospital will give them the kind of back-up and support services that can only be provided at a District General Hospital.

"It will also enable more efficient use of resources and scarce qualified, specialist staff. The Medical School supports the move to concentrate teaching on two sites, at the new hospital and Charing Cross, rather than three.

"Riverside Health Authority intends to provide a new primary health care centre, at Pimlico and five new nursing homes to replace some of the services now offered by St Mary Abbot's and the Westminster Hospital. The total plan will, I believe, provide the most up-to-date health care available for people in west central London".

The new hospital will have an Accident and Emergency Department capable of dealing with up to 60,000 cases a year. Planned support services include pathology, pharmacy and radiology. The maternity unit will be a regional perinatal centre with a full range of specialist and intensive care for the district and elsewhere in North West Thames.

Operating facilities will include six operating theatres supported by an Intensive Care Unit and a Coronary Care Unit. Day hospital amenities will be provided for the elderly, and mentally ill. An Adult Day Unit will provide two treatment suites and an operating theatre suite. There will also be a five bed Day Unit for children.

Comprehensive out-patients' services will include fracture, orthopaedic, dental, ophthalmic, dermatology and ENT clinics and a Drug Dependency Unit.

Great attention has been focussed on staff amenities and there will be accommodation for 250 nurses on site, an occupational health centre and day nursery.

NOTE TO EDITORS

The project ensures that the level of acute services for the population of Riverside will be maintained and provided in new and improved facilities. When the services from a number of different hospitals are rationalised onto one site the district will be able to realise savings of up to £15 million which can then be deployed to improve health services elsewhere in the region.

media enquiries: Sue Jones 01 210 5224

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