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PRIME MINISTER

7 April 1989

COMMUNITY CARE

Meeting with Roy Griffiths

Roy Griffiths can be congratulated for his diligent professional work. His report has stimulated lively debate since its publication earlier last year. We may disagree with the report's main recommendation but it is essential we keep him on our side. During a conversation with me a few weeks ago he made three main points:

- He is still disappointed over the handling of the release of his report last year by John Moore.
- He believes his arguments for the local authority solution - expounded in more detail in the follow-up report by the inter-departmental working group ('IDG') - have not been examined seriously. By excluding him from the ministerial meetings, he feels he has not had the opportunity to air his views at a senior level.
- The media has requested interviews on a regular basis. He has declined to respond 'so far'.

We can do little about the first concern. We can counter the second by explaining why the Government is sceptical of the local authority model.

It is absolutely crucial that he should not choose to communicate with the media out of a sense of injustice. This meeting provides an opportunity to make Roy Griffiths feel that his views have been properly aired and taken account of.

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You will want to allow him to state his case. But having done so, I believe it is important to explain our concerns.

In his note, Roy Griffiths refutes our main concern over the implementation of his local authority proposal. He argues it is quite wrong to suggest that his report gives local authorities major new responsibilities!

In one sense he is right. Local authorities already manage residential homes and provide domiciliary care, albeit patchily. But surely there will be three significant changes:

POINTS TO MAKE

- 1 In the past, local authorities have provided all services. In the future, the Griffiths' Report envisages that local authorities will buy a range of services from the voluntary and private sectors in addition to direct provision in the public sector. Will left wing councils have the ability or will power to take on the increased contractual responsibilities?
- 2 The Griffiths' Report proposes 'major switches of financial responsibility for community care to local authorities from both social security and health authorities'. Will the local authorities give better value for money?
- 3 Social services departments would need to expand to meet the enhanced responsibilities of assessment and the need to purchase packages of care within a budget. According to one experienced social work team leader, 'social workers are not equipped to manage these increased responsibilities'. Demands for extended training

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would abound. And some left wing councils would use the opportunity to engineer their own solution - not necessarily based on individual choice. Is there a danger that local authorities will change the assessment criteria to satisfy their own objectives (eg perhaps never to place an individual in a private residential home)?

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