



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY

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From the Secretary of State for ~~Health~~ Health

The Rt Hon John Major MP
 Chief Secretary of the Treasury
 HM Treasury
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15 May 1989

Dear Chief Secretary

PROPOSED NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS TO EXPLAIN THE NEW GP CONTRACT

You will recall that on 4 May 1989 I reached agreement on the major points of a new contract for GPs with the negotiators of the British Medical Association's General Medical Services Committee. The media coverage that followed this agreement failed to get across the impact of the new contract in terms of services to patients. As a result, there still exists a degree of public concern about the service provided by GPs, and some confusion about the likely changes in the GP service when the new contract is in operation. This is the kind of thing that was concerning colleagues when, on 27 April, Cabinet invited me to consider what more might be done within the conventions on paid Government publicity, to make the case for changes in the NHS.

I am proposing therefore to run a limited number of newspaper advertisements to explain what the new contract will mean for patient services. I attach the proposed text of the advertisement. This would run in a range of daily newspapers (Times, Telegraph, Independent, Guardian, Express and Mail). The estimated cost is £150,000. Making sure the public are fully informed about the services on offer is a major part of our efforts to improve the family doctor service; I believe these advertisements are a necessary and defensible part of that process.

Naturally I am keen to get on with this. I should be grateful if you would let me know as soon as possible, if you are content for this to proceed.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Malcolm Rifkind, Peter Walker and Sir Robin Butler.

Yours sincerely

P.P. KENNETH CLARKE

(Approved by the Secretary of State and signed in his absence).

AN OPEN LETTER TO EVERYONE WHO USES THE FAMILY DOCTOR SERVICE

There has been a great deal of talk about the new contract for Britain's 32,000 GPs that I agreed recently with doctors' leaders. Because the contract is really about developing a different and better family doctor service it is essential that you know what the changes will mean for you as a patient.

The new contract will encourage all GPs to develop a wider range of high quality services to attract and retain patients. The promotion of health and the active prevention of disease will become a central part of the service you receive from your doctor.

The main changes you can expect to see are as follows:

- * more regular assessment of the development of young children by their doctor
- * doctors doing even more to protect the public from disease by immunising children and by screening for cervical cancer
- * much more in the way of health promotion clinics and regular health assessments for all patients
- * night visits being made more often by patients' own doctors or by a doctor they know
- * GPs doing even more to maintain the health of elderly patients and to keep in regular contact with them
- * more minor surgery on the doctor's own premises to save patients having to visit hospital
- * improved services in deprived areas
- * doctors being more available at times convenient to patients

Patient choice will be the all important factor in our efforts to make the family doctor service even better.

GPs will produce practice leaflets and they will be allowed to advertise so you will be fully informed about the services available. And we also intend to make it much easier for you to choose and change your GP.

Of course many GPs already run very good practices. Under the new arrangements they will be better rewarded. Others will be encouraged to develop their services to reflect the needs and preferences of patients.

The new contract will be a vital step in the Government's action to improve the Health Service. It will help to give patients of all ages an even better quality of care.

Kenneth Clarke
Secretary of State for Health