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IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY CARE

There is another strong argument for delaying the implementation of the community care proposals, in addition to the implications for the community charge.

Health Authorities are saying that the community care changes will place an enormous burden on NHS management, at a time when their main priority is to drive forward the health reforms. Their view is that most local authorities are unprepared for the changes. In which case, the NHS may have to pick up the tab as the provider of last resort. In practical terms, this could lead to larger geriatric wards in hospitals at increased cost.

In the words of Douglas Hague, the Manager of the Northern Region:

"Another strand of new development derives from the White Paper "Caring for People"; although the lead rests with Social Services, the RHA has a role in implementation. There are signs that progress is very slow in Local Authorities, and they have concerns about the financial implications which may affect implementation. This is another demand on management time. To be successful there will have to be effective co-ordination of LAs, DHSSs, FPCs, RHAs, GPs, voluntary organisations and the private sector. Major problems could arise."

In the discussion with Kenneth Clarke next week you may want to suggest a phased introduction or a delayed implementation of the community care reforms.



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