

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY**

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*From the Joint Parliamentary Under Secretary of State*Mike Pattison Esq
10 Downing Street

23 December 1981

Dear Mike

Your letter of 17 December to John Halliday asked for brief notes for the Prime Minister's use for interviews which she will be giving shortly after Christmas. I attach some notes, approved by my Secretary of State, covering this Department's interests.

*Yours ever,**David*D J CLARK
Private Secretary

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 1981 AND OUTLOOK FOR 1982

(1) 1981

1. The Government has maintained its pledges on NHS spending and has achieved a real growth of 5 per cent over 1978-79, while looking to greater efficiency and more realistic charges for an appropriate contribution. Receipts from land sales have doubled to over £15m in the last two years.
2. We have launched the £1 for £1 scheme to enlist voluntary organisations, help to get mentally handicapped children out of hospital and into the community.
3. The number of doctors employed in the NHS rose in the year to September 1980 by 1000. The number of qualified nurses and midwives rose by 21000 in the two years to March 1981. (Some of this increase is due to the reduction in nurses' working week).
4. Hospital waiting lists have continued to fall and by March had fallen by 120,000 from the record level of 750,000 under the previous administration.
5. New hospital developments opened during the year have brought to 19 the number under the present government. Ministers have intervened to prevent the closure of 12 threatened hospitals.
7. The Social Security benefit programme currently costs over £26bn. annually. It is contributing savings of around £1½bn. to the Government's programme for reduced public expenditure. Even so we have fully protected pensioners and paid increases in benefits in November costing over £2 bn.
8. The DHSS has continued to reduce numbers. By the end of 1981 headquarters staff will be down 14% from April 1979 levels, well on target to a 20% reduction by April 1984.
9. During 1981, five Rayner scrutinies were completed, two in the field of NI contributions, and others on unemployment benefit, forms and communications. 4,500 staff savings in DHSS have been identified.
10. The Department has also completed a review of its social security regional organisation, and major staff savings and increased efficiency will result.

(2) 1982

1. The Mental Health Bill, now before Parliament, will provide proper safeguards for mentally disordered people and represents a major piece of social reform.
2. We shall follow up our consultative document "Care in the Community" and seek to transfer resources from hospital to community care.
3. Efforts to improve NHS efficiency will continue, and we shall introduce arrangements to improve the accountability of the NHS for its expenditure.
4. Legislation to introduce the employers' statutory sick pay scheme and unified housing benefit is currently before Parliament. These measures will reduce Central Government interference and achieve significant staff savings.
5. The DHSS will continue its work on efficiency, including a further programme of Rayner scrutinies and the development of computer facilities.