

PRIME MINISTER

AIDS

Tomorrow morning we have set aside half an hour at 0930 for you to be briefed on AIDS. The Lord President, the Secretary of State for Social Services, Minister for Health and Sir Donald Acheson, the DHSS Chief Medical Officer, will be present.

We have not asked DHSS for a brief for the meeting: the intention is to give them a chance to explain how the problem is developing, and what the various options are. A note by David Willetts is attached giving some questions you may wish to ask.

PPB

ANDY BEARPARK

26 November 1986

AIDS

I suggest you begin tomorrow's meeting by inviting the Chief Medical Officer, Sir Donald Acheson, to describe briefly the medical and scientific aspects of Aids. Norman Fowler and Tony Newton might then wish to talk about the measures they are taking.

Here are some questions you might wish to raise:

- i. Aids is at present largely confined to homosexuals and drug addicts. But in America Aids has spread into the heterosexual population, via drug-taking prostitutes. What is the right public education message - that we are all at risk or that only specific groups are?
- ii. 50% of drug addicts in Edinburgh are infected with the Aids virus because restrictions on supplies of needles have led them to share dirty ones. So the DHSS is now under great pressure to distribute free sterilised needles to drug addicts. The dilemma here is obvious. What is the best way forward?
- iii. Most Aids cases are in London, so the costs are falling disproportionately on the London hospitals. Is this going to add more fuel to the RAWP issue? Are we heading it off?
- iv. What is the weakest point in our argument? Where is the Government most exposed to criticism?

Finally, Aids has been absorbing most of the energies of both Tony Newton and Norman Fowler for the past few weeks. Is more of the 'normal' NHS management work therefore being handled by Roy Griffiths, Tony Newton's deputy on the Management Board?

David Willetts
DAVID WILLETTS