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CONFIDENTIAL

Paul Gray Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
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19 October 1988

Dear Paul,

STOCKTAKING REVIEW OF THE HEALTH SERVICE IN SCOTLAND

My Secretary of State minuted to the Prime Minister on 11 October to suggest that, at the meeting on 17 October to discuss the NHS review, it would be helpful to decide then whether and when the proposed stocktaking booklet on the Scottish Health Service should be published. I understand that this was not in fact discussed at the meeting, and you have since asked the latest date at which the stocktaking booklet could appropriately be published.

I should perhaps emphasise first that the stocktaking booklet will in no way conflict with any likely outcome of the NHS review. Indeed, we believe it will be positively helpful to have the document on the record as a base point, similar to those available in other parts of the UK, from which the review will develop.

An important factor in our timing is that the stocktaking booklet contains my Secretary of State's response to a report "Scottish Health Authorities Priorities for the Eighties and Nineties" (the SHARPEN report) which was submitted to him by the Scottish Health Service Planning Council in May this year. The intention was to publish the stocktaking booklet first, and subsequently to publish SHARPEN. There is increasing public impatience about SHARPEN, most recently shown by a question from the Social Services Committee to my Secretary of State's officials about when SHARPEN would appear.

My Secretary of State's judgement is therefore that he cannot without considerable difficulty delay the publication of SHARPEN beyond the end of November and the prior publication of the stocktaking booklet beyond mid-November; and that publication earlier than that would be preferable.

I have sent copies of this letter to Geoffrey Podger, Stephen Williams, Mike Maxwell, Carys Evans, Sir Robin Butler, Trevor Woolley and Richard Wilson (Cabinet Office), and John Whitehead (Policy Unit).

David
DAVID CRAWLEY
Private Secretary

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