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From the Secretary of State for Social Services

The Editor
The Independent
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13 September 1989

D. S.

I hope that women readers were not unnecessarily alarmed by your report of Harriet Harman claiming that the NHS Reforms will deprive women of their opportunity to choose where to give birth to their child. The purpose of our proposals is to give more choice to women for all kinds of care.

There is no question that any of my White Paper proposals will force any patient or expectant mothers to travel anywhere unless they choose to do so in order to obtain a better service.

The contract system that I propose to introduce will for the first time ensure that NHS resources will follow the patient to the unit selected by him or her on the advice of a GP. We are discussing the details with the Service and the professions in order to ensure that the system can accommodate the clinical judgement of the GP and the individual preferences of his patients. I believe that Harriet Harman and I are really in agreement in our aims that we should continue to extend the range of choice that is in practice available to expectant mothers. I believe that my proposals do just that.

J. L. Clarke

KENNETH CLARKE



Telephone 01-210 3000

From the Secretary of State for Social Services

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The Editor
The Times
1 Pennington Street
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13 September 1989

D. S.

Harriet Harman's misrepresentations about the effects our proposals will have on maternity services (Times 13 September) cannot be allowed to pass.

One of the best features of the NHS in recent years has been the extent to which mothers have increasingly been given and have exercised much more choice about where and how their children should be delivered. The whole point of our proposals is to increase that choice. In future more resources will be allocated to those places where patients wish to go and where GPs wish to see their patients treated.

Under the White Paper reforms health authorities will need to ensure that a full range of maternity services is available for mothers so that they can choose with the help of their GP the location and type of delivery which best suits them. The District Health Authorities and GPs will therefore, under our new system, place contracts for maternity and other services to satisfy the widest possible range of referral needs.

J. — L. Clarke

KENNETH CLARKE