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Price Mark 2

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The Rt Hon Norman Lamont MP
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Telephone 01 210 5155
From the Secretary of
State for Health

27 October 1989

I think the tone

Language of the advert. will be
seen as very anti-doctor

Dr Norman

Instead of interviews to "will be better able to?"
and then "what services will be
regularly available?" - there
are only suggestions but
the

THE NEW GP CONTRACT - INFORMING THE PUBLIC

In May of this year, after I concluded an agreement with GPs' leaders on the new contract for GPs, I considered running a series of newspaper advertisements about the contract. In the event, the campaign did not go ahead.

Nevertheless I think there are very strong arguments for informing the public about the new services which we expect to be made available to them (and which they should seek) and about new arrangements for changing doctors and making complaints which they may wish to use. Making sure that the public are fully informed about the services that they can expect to get from their GP is a major part of our efforts to improve the family doctor service. Provided Parliament rejects the negative resolution against the regulations making important changes in the GP service which I laid on 16 October, they will come into effect on 7 November 1989. There will be immediate changes in the arrangements for changing doctor and a period of preparation before the GPs' new contract becomes operational from 1 April 1990.

I am proposing therefore to run a public information campaign from 7 November. This would inform the public of the changes to come and of the simplified arrangements for changing doctor which will come into effect immediately.

The campaign would consist of a number of newspaper advertisements to appear in the period 7-11 November backed up by a more detailed leaflet available from libraries, pharmacies and FPCs. I attach the proposed texts of the advertisement (Annex A) and the leaflet (Annex B). The estimated cost of this initiative is £280,000.



I would be grateful if you could let me know as soon as possible if you are content for this to proceed, as the costings assume early agreement.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Malcolm Rifkind, Peter Walker and Sir Robin Butler. I would welcome any comments from my fellow Secretaries of State on the draft material.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "K. Clarke", with a large loop on the left and a vertical stroke on the right.

KENNETH CLARKE

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO THE FAMILY DOCTOR SERVICE

WHAT THEY MEAN FOR YOU

From 1 April 1990 changes to the GP service will mean that all GPs have incentives to develop a wider range of high quality services to meet your needs. So what should you expect to get from your family doctor?

- * GPs more available at times you find convenient
- * extra services for the over 75s - including an annual visit to your home to make sure all is well and an annual health check-up
- * more regular assessment of your young child's development
- * doctors having targets to make sure that more children are immunised against disease and more women are screened for cancer of the cervix
- * much more in the way of health promotion clinics to help you keep well
- * regular 'life-style' check-ups for all adults
- * doctors encouraged to make night visits themselves or ensure they are made by a doctor you are likely to know
- * all GPs required to produce leaflets explaining what services are available from their practices
- * new local directories of family doctors giving more information about services

If you want to change your doctor you'll find it easier to do so. From today, all you have to do is turn up at the surgery of the doctor of your choice and ask to be registered. If your new doctor agrees to put you on his or her list, that's it. No bureaucracy, no fuss.

The changes aim to give higher standards, a better range of services and more choice in the family doctor service.

A leaflet explaining the changes in more detail, including the simpler complaints procedure, is available from [DN: Mr Meredith to advise]

Issued by the Health Departments in England and Wales

(1)

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Leaflet - Annex B

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO THE FAMILY
DOCTOR SERVICE

what they mean for you

(2)

IMPROVEMENTS IN THE GP SERVICE

From 1 April 1990 changes to the GP service will mean that all GPs have incentives to develop a wider range of high quality services to meet your needs. The promotion of health and the active prevention of disease will become a central part of the service you get from your GP.

So what should you expect to get from your family doctor?

A service to keep you well:

* extra services for the over 75s - includes the offer of an annual visit to your home by your doctor or a member of the practice team to make sure all is well and that you are able to cope and the offer of an annual check-up to make sure that all that can be done to maintain your hearing, sight and mobility is being done

* signing up your young children (under 5s) with your GP for developmental care. That means checking on the height, weight, growth, development of the senses and other essential features in the first five years of your child's life

* doctors to ensure maximum protection from disease by immunising children (against diphtheria, tetanus and polio; measles, mumps and rubella; and whooping cough) and by screening women at risk for cancer of the cervix

* GPs to provide more health promotion clinics. Examples include diet, anti-smoking, diabetes, heart disease, alcohol control, stress management and well-person clinics

* regular 'life-style' check-ups available to all adult patients - offered first of all when you register with a doctor

A better service from your GP practice:

* doctors more available at times you find convenient

* doctors will be encouraged to make night visits themselves (or ensure they are made by a doctor you are likely to know) rather than using deputising services

* more minor surgery on the doctor's own premises to save you the trouble of having to visit hospital

(4)

- * more professional staff in the surgery such as practice nurses, chiropodists, counsellors and physiotherapists

Other improvements in the GP service:

- * more public money will be available for improvements in premises

- * practices in deprived areas will receive financial assistance in recognition of the greater demands and needs of patients living in these areas

- * a new allowance payable to encourage your doctor to keep up to date with the latest medical information and knowledge

The changes aim to give higher standards, a better range of services and more choice in the family doctor service.

MORE INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

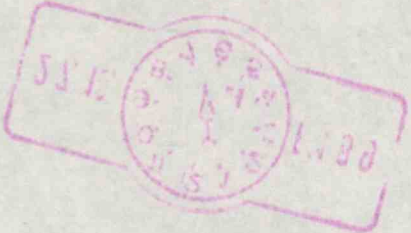
The Government believes that patients should know more about the services their doctor provides. From next April all GPs will be required to produce leaflets explaining what services are available from their practices, such as health promotion clinics, child health services and minor surgery.

Local Family Practitioner Committees (who are responsible for the services provided by GPs) will produce new local directories of family doctors giving more information about each doctor and the services the practice provides. In future, the Government intends that GPs will be able to advertise their services in a responsible, professional manner.

EASIER TO CHANGE DOCTOR

If you want to change your doctor you'll find it easier to do so. From 7 November 1989 all you have to do is turn up at the surgery of the doctor of your choice and ask to be registered. If your new doctor agrees to put you on his or her list, that's it. The bureaucracy and embarrassment of having to ask your former GP's permission to leave have been done away with.

(5)



A SIMPLER SYSTEM FOR MAKING COMPLAINTS

Regulations to be laid before Parliament will make the system for making complaints about the GP service simpler from 1 April 1990:

- as now, complaints should be made to your local Family Practitioner Committee (FPC) or, if the complaint is about standards of behaviour or conduct, to the General Medical Council. Your local Community Health Council will be able to help you if you wish to pursue a complaint
- the time limit for making a complaint will be extended from 8 to 13 weeks after the event in question.
- oral complaints will be dealt with as well as written complaints
- new rules will be introduced to ensure that complaints may be transferred to another FPC for investigation to avoid conflict of interest
- all Family Practitioner Committees will be required to make available informal procedures if the complaint is of a less serious nature. [These procedures will be extended to include dentists, pharmacists and opticians.]