

MR TURNBULL

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THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE: ANNUAL REPORT

Norman Fowler has written to the Prime Minister attaching a draft annual report on health services in England. It is intended to be the first in a series. He wants to publish it shortly before the Party Conference. The Prime Minister could congratulate him on looking for new ways of getting across the positive message on the health service, copying this to colleagues.

The document is too long. The only bits which most people will bother to read are the foreword and the first chapter, which the Prime Minister may wish to glance at if she has time. The first chapter gets over some good themes - improved productivity and better services to patients. It is a bit thin on responsiveness to consumers (paragraph 24) and contracting-out (the last part of paragraph 26). We would like the DHSS to make rather more of the need to create economic pressures to lower costs and satisfy the patient.

The DHSS think that they have need to keep the other factual material to back up the bold assertions in the opening section, and it is a useful store of juicy facts for speeches. The later chapters could be reorganised by bringing the Consumer and Management to the fore as chapters

and Questions  
briefing

2 and 3, and ending with the Estate which is not very eye-catching.

The report deliberately avoids announcing any new policies - these are being kept for the Green Paper on Family Practitioners. So there is little we would quarrel with, though colleagues may wish to pick up some points of detail.

The whole thing is unfortunately weighed down with leaden bureaucratic prose. The opening sections in particular need to be punchier and zippier as the language is not right for general consumption.

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