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CEB

MR WILLETTS

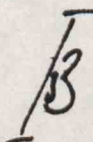
NHS WAITING LISTS

I have chased Michael Fairey of the NHS management board about the scrutiny suggested in David Norgrove's minute of 9 December. He said that Victor Paige is pondering how to reply and has in mind to organise a small seminar for the latter part of January to clear the ground and establish what are the known practical steps that can be taken to reduce waiting lists. He would invite outsiders and would include you and me.

I said that was all very well but a scrutiny could be used to bring a sense of management urgency and to show that progress is possible. He saw the point of this but claimed, however, that the real issue in reducing waiting lists is how the districts manage their beds. Interpretation of figures about waiting lists is difficult and, perversely, an improvement in performance can result in waiting lists getting longer because GPs then start referring more patients who otherwise they would have kept on a pre-waiting list. So his argument was that any scrutiny would have to go for the actions which management can take that have a bearing on waiting lists and would not have to treat waiting lists as an end in themselves. He thought it might be possible, for instance, to take the worst 20 districts and to put in a scrutiny team armed with the outcome of the proposed seminar and enjoined to find out which of the remedies would help those 20 districts and how they should be carried forward.

The next step, therefore, would be for Victor Paige to contact us.

I am copying this to David Norgrove, Richard Broadbent and Michael Stark.



IAN B BEESLEY

20 December 1985

NHS: Eyo + EY
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