

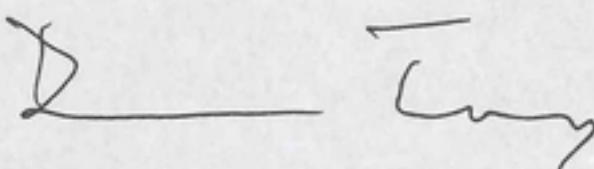


Richmond House 79 Whitehall London SW1A 2NS Telephone 0171 210 3000  
*From the Secretary of State for Health*

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Tony Worthington MP  
Minister for Health and Social Services  
Northern Ireland Office  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont  
Belfast BT4 3PP

26 March 1998



**CONSULTATION PAPER ON THE FUTURE OF THE HEALTH AND PERSONAL  
SOCIAL SERVICES IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

Thank you for copying to me your letter of 12 March to John Prescott.

I can certainly endorse the main thrust of the Paper which does follow the main thrust of ours. However, I do have concerns about the tactic, in Chapter Six, of setting out in some detail the three approaches to NHS structures outlined in the Scottish, Welsh and English White papers, and then going on to present your proposals for Northern Ireland by reference to these. It seems to me to be unwise to invite comparison between the detail of the three approaches. This runs the danger of inviting comparisons between them; undermines the cohesiveness of this government's approach to a single NHS and will spotlight any differences. To date we have successfully focused on the themes that unite our approaches. Although there will inevitably need to be differences in the details of implementation between the home countries we have so far managed to avoid inviting comparisons between them. I was unhappy in particular with the way in which Primary Care Groups were handled in this respect.

Accordingly, I think that we need to do some further work these aspects of the paper before it is released, to recast (or even perhaps drop) Chapter Six and revise Chapter Seven accordingly.


While I understand why you propose winding up the GP fundholding scheme a year later than is planned for other parts of the UK, it is important that this is not used by fundholders to argue for delay elsewhere. It will be important that we work together closely on presentation, so that we are all able to maintain momentum.





My officials would be happy to work with yours on this, and I should be grateful for sight of a revised text before it is issued, please.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, members of HS and to Sir Richard Wilson.

  
FRANK DOBSON