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The Agenda for Health: A Review of Government Policies

Paul Plant

December 1998

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Forward

I am pleased to commend this document to you. It originated from a discussion that Hilary Samson-Barry, Head of Health Development at North Thames Regional Office and I had last year. We believed it would be important for key decision makers in the NHS to understand the impact that other Government changes would have on the health service. In particular we had concerns that there could be important strategic and economic implications that had yet to be considered by health commentators.

Paul Plant's analysis outlines the emergent themes across Government organisations that particularly impact on health. The principles of social justice; joined up policy making; the protection of the public; inspection and monitoring and partnership are the new messages. This new *modus operandi* will have an impact on society and health status if we work in appropriate harmony with our partner organisations. It requires not only a new mind set, but needs all of us to keep up with the new policies as they emerge. This document is a useful tool for health decision makers that highlights where they should start to look for rule changes as well as learning to think differently.

Dr Maureen Dalziel
Former Regional Director of Public Health
NHS Executive North Thames

Introduction

This paper provides a guide to the major policies that have been initiated by the Government since it came into office in May 1997. The principal aim is to inform people working in the NHS about the main changes that are proposed across a number of areas of Government responsibility. The central elements of the NHS reforms are also included, however, to ensure that the paper is equally useful for those also working to promote the health of populations outside of the NHS.

The paper focuses on those policies which will impact on:

- the wider determinants of health, such as poverty, the environment and social exclusion;
- the priorities, lead responsibilities, organisation, or structure of those government departments and bodies key to promoting health.

The rationale underpinning this work is the belief that a better knowledge and understanding of the Government's overall objectives and the policy changes it has initiated are important elements in fostering partnership working across agencies.

The paper is in two parts. Part A covers the Government's objectives and the policy themes that are emerging. Part B provides an inventory of key policy changes outside the NHS. No critique is offered of these policies in terms of the desirability of their aims, or their likely effectiveness. The intention is simply to provide information on what is being attempted or changed.

Part A

Overall Government Objectives and Key Policy Themes

1. Overall Objectives

The Government has set out its central aims for this term of office. These are:

- ensuring high and stable levels of economic growth and employment;
- the promotion of social inclusion;
- the modernisation of public services; and
- democratic renewal.

Each aim has been articulated in a variety of ways and the Government's commitment to them form the introduction to key policy statements and documents.

2. Key Themes

A number of themes are emerging with respect to what this Government believes are the best ways to achieve its central aims. These can be seen when all the reforms are viewed as a whole. Particular ones of note to an audience interested in health include:

i. Health is Everyone's Responsibility

A number of Green and White Papers, including *Our Healthier Nation*, stress the multifactorial determinants of health. In key areas they also require each government department to take account of the health impact of their actions when formulating policy. Such a broad public health perspective is to be welcomed by those wanting to promote the health of their population.

ii. What Works is What Matters

Great stress is being placed on the belief that it is what works that should be important and not the blind following of a particular dogma in policy formation. As such, it could simply be described as pragmatic policy making. The so called 'Third Way' has many proponents and critics but it is an important theme that runs through key Government proposals.

iii. Pilots

In many policy areas pilots have been set up to consider the take-up and impact of specific initiatives (eg each of the New Deals, the various Action Zones). These are designed to help establish the best way of rolling out particular programmes. Inevitably though, not all policy proposals appear to be backed by evidence of their likely effectiveness.

iv. Joined Up Policy Making

Central government departments are being instructed to work collaboratively so that their collective policies address key issues of concern to this Government. Such exhortations are contained in a large number of policy statements and the need for 'joined up' policy making also informed the setting up of the Social Exclusion Unit.

v. Partnership Working

Considerable stress is placed on the need to break down barriers between agencies to foster inter-agency collaboration. This is seen to be fundamental to ensuring that service provision is based on meeting the needs of service users and local communities, rather than those of particular agencies. Such partnerships will also ensure that maximum benefit is received from the collective limited resources at each agencies disposal.

All government organisations are also expected to work dynamically with appropriate non-statutory agencies, local communities and individuals.

vi. Responsibility

The respective roles of central government, local agencies, communities and individuals are made explicit in many policy initiatives. This is designed to clarify how policy changes are to be carried through and what to expect from public sector agencies, but just as importantly the role of individuals and their communities in ensuring the success of policy initiatives.

vii. Local Solutions

There is a strong emphasis on promoting an environment where local agencies are empowered to come up with local solutions to local problems, with the input of the community they serve. Within this context, an increased emphasis of regionalism is being promoted. This stress on local solutions is

linked to both the emphasis on partnership and being explicit with respect to responsibility. It is viewed as the only way certain policies will be effective, especially those relating to urban regeneration, or the promotion of social inclusion.

viii. Explicit Performance Frameworks

There is explicit reference to the performance standards against which public sector organisations are to be judged, with a growing move towards the dissemination of key indicators of performance in 'league tables' (eg in education, local authority services, the NHS). Many commentators have viewed this move as a concrete sign of the increasing concentration of power towards central government. There is an inevitable tension between devolving decision making and action to a local level with a very rigid and tight central performance management framework which sets objectives to be achieved and monitors results very closely.

ix. Area Based Policies

The targeting of policy on particular geographies can also be found in health, education and employment. Such Action Zones will focus activities across all relevant organisations and agencies and allow for a change in policies and if necessary legislation, to allow more successful pooling of expertise and resources. Incentives are offered by injecting pump priming monies into the Action Zones. Although the logic is clear with respect to such approaches, whether area based policies are more cost-effective than ones targeting particular groups of people is still to be demonstrated.

Part B

Inventory of Key Policy Changes

1. Introduction

This section offers a brief overview of key policy developments. Although the central aims of this Government have been made clear, it is difficult to document each policy by reference to the aim to which it is directed, as they often relate to more than one. There is no simple solution to this problem so where possible policies are organised by theme in this paper, but otherwise they are simply listed in no particular order of priority.

Given the scale of the task reviewing all areas of Government responsibility, emphasis is on those policy proposals set out in Government Green and White Papers, which offer details about broad directions of travel. The timing of when individual policies were introduced, or are expected to come into effect, is not given in detail. (Although a synopsis of the Queen's Speech which outlines the legislative timetable for the next session of Parliament is contained in the Appendix). It is very difficult to track policies through time and the document to remain current. This means that readers interested in the details of particular policies will have to research these further.

The majority of the papers cited can be obtained from the Government's own Internet web-sites (web-site addresses are given at the end). The name of particular papers are identified in bold italics in the main text (eg ***The New NHS: Modern and Dependable***).

2. Management of the Economy

A strong economy with high levels of growth is an aim in itself, but also a key to the success of many of the Government's policies. This Government believes economic health is best achieved by medium and long-term policies that are not changed in response to short-term pressures. Particular policies which, according to the Chancellor, ensure long-term stability are:

- ◆ Putting monetary policy into the hands of the Bank of England (the Monetary Policy Committee, Chaired by the Governor of the Bank of England);

- ◆ The aim of achieving a current balance on Government expenditure and income and 'prudent' levels of debt to national income.

(See the Chancellor's speech introducing the Comprehensive Spending Review).

3. The Comprehensive Spending Review

- 3.1 The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), completed in the Summer of 1998, indicated that within a tight settlement, both the NHS and education will be priority areas for spending. [The detailed outcome of the CSR is detailed in *Modern Public Services: Investing in Reform*. Her Majesty's Treasury]. The CSR sets out the details of the key activities and funding levels going to all government departments over the next three years.

The CSR is also important in that it makes concrete the way in which the Government will manage not only the economy but all of its activities and spending. Particular points to note include:

- All new resources are conditional on the implementation of reforms that 'modernise' services.
- Contracts have been established between the Treasury and each department. These set out 3 year spending targets, rather than the yearly PES settlements, and stipulate efficiency targets for the delivery of services of between 3 and 10 percent. All spending plans should seek to direct more resources to front-line services.

These contracts detail departmental objectives and targets that have to be met, the stages by which they have to be met, how departments intend to allocate resources to achieve these targets and the process that will monitor the results. The detailed objectives of all departments were published by the Treasury.

- The continuous scrutiny and audit of each department will be overseen by a Cabinet committee and money will be released only if departments keep to their plans.

4. The National Lottery

A White Paper on the National Lottery was presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in July 1997. *The People's Lottery* sets out proposals to:

- Establish a New Opportunities Fund

This will fund new initiatives in health, education and the environment. The Government are at pains to stress that the New Opportunities Fund will not take over its core responsibility for education, the health service or the environment. Initially the Fund will finance initiatives that: train and support 500,000 teachers in the use of IT [this will also help to ensure the National Grid for Learning, which is connecting schools to the Internet, can be used to best effect]; out of school activities; and a network of Healthy Living Centres.

- Ensure that Lottery monies are distributed more equitably and more decisions are taken at grass-roots level.
- Establish the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts [NESTA]

This will seek to 'help talented individuals develop their full potential; help turn creativity and ideas into products and services; and contribute to public education about these areas'.

5. Service First

- 5.1 The Government has initiated a central charter programme *Service First: The New Charter Programme*, aimed at setting out clear standards in public services, nationally and locally and reporting on performance against these. It has developed nine principles of public service delivery in promoting: responsiveness, quality, effectiveness and cross-sectoral working. The first major initiative in this area is Better Government for Older People (see *Building a Better Britain for Older People*). This initiative has established 28 local authority run pilots across the UK to develop and test integrated inter-agency strategies which improve public services for older people by better meeting their needs, listening to their views and encouraging and recognising their contribution.

6. The NHS

6.1 The New NHS: Modern and Dependable

A series of Green and White Papers and separate policy proposals have been issued during the last year designed to reorganise and reshape the NHS. *The New NHS: Modern and Dependable* White Paper was issued in December 1997. The proposals set out where for the NHS in England (there are separate papers for Scotland and Wales). Key reforms include:

- Making health authorities responsible for working in partnership with other local statutory and non-statutory organisations and the local community to develop Health Improvement Plans (HiMPs).
- The abolition of the GP Fundholding Scheme, with primary care involvement in commissioning services in future being through the creation of Primary Care Groups (PCGs). What their responsibilities will be are dependent on their level of development and aspirations (eg Level 1 and 2 PCGs are formally part of the local HA, levels 3 and 4 are free standing organisations). The vision is that PCGs will have a strong population health focus and will develop organisationally so that over time they become Primary Care Trusts ('Level 4' PCGs).
- Moving away from yearly contracting between health authorities and trusts for the provision of health care to 3 year service agreements.

A number of other reforms are strongly signalled which have subsequently been picked up and made more specific in further White Papers and policy documents (see below).

6.2 Our Healthier Nation

Our Healthier Nation Green Paper, published in February 1998, sets out proposals for concerted action to improve people's living conditions and health. Recognising that there are limits to what the Government can do, it proposes a 'contract for health', which delineates what it should be doing, what local health and other organisations should be doing, and what is the responsibility of communities and individuals. An important factor to achieve change will be partnership working between organisations and local communities, making it incumbent on all Government agencies to work collaboratively together.

For each of four priority areas a National Target to improve health is to be established, along with a National Contract. The four areas are:

- Heart disease and stroke
- Accidents
- Cancer
- Mental Health

The paper also identifies three settings which offer the opportunity to 'focus the drive against health inequalities and improve health overall'. These are:

- Healthy Schools - focusing on children
- Health Workplaces - focusing on adults
- Healthy Neighbourhoods - focusing on older people.

Links are made in the paper with the establishment of Health Improvement Plans, National Service Frameworks, the setting up of Health Action Zones (HAZs), and Healthy Living Centres.

6.3 Health Action Zones

The first wave of Health Action Zones (HAZs) were chosen in March 1998. The eleven selected areas aim to bring together all those in a health authority area to improve the health of local people. The accent is on forging partnerships between agencies and the community, to find innovative new ways to tackle health problems, reduce health inequalities and reshape local services. HAZs are expected to tackle the causes of ill-health in their area. Subsequent waves of HAZs are expected, which build on the experience of previous Zones.

6.4 A First Class Service

Some of the proposals which were highlighted first in *Modern and Dependable*, are given more detail in the White Paper *A First Class Service: Quality in the New NHS*, issued for consultation in the Summer 1998. This aims to establish clear, national standards for services, supported by consistent evidence-based guidance to enable quality standards to be raised and made consistent across the NHS. To do this it sets out proposals helpful in: setting quality standards; delivering quality standards; and monitoring quality standards.

Setting Quality Standards

A new National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) is being set up to offer clear, consistent guidance for clinicians about which treatments work best for which patients. NICE will assess new and existing health care interventions for their clinical and cost-effectiveness and produce and disseminate guidance.

National Service Frameworks will be developed to define how services are best provided, to what standards. The Frameworks will also set out what patients can expect to receive from the NHS in major care areas or disease groups. These have built on work already under way on children's intensive care and Calman-Hine cancer services. The first two new frameworks are on coronary heart disease and mental health.

Delivering Quality Standards

The Government will help ensure national quality standards are applied consistently through a new system of clinical governance; extended life-long learning for health professionals as well as professional self-regulation

Monitoring Quality Standards

Monitoring of quality within the NHS is seen to take place through the **National Performance Framework** (the first proposals for which are detailed in a separate policy document which was consulted on earlier in 1998). This will monitor six areas: health improvement; fair access to services; effective delivery of health care; efficiency; patient and carer experience; and health outcomes of NHS care.

A new statutory body The Commission for Health Improvement will provide an independent assessment of local action to improve quality. It will visit all trusts in a rolling review programme to ensure that clinical governance arrangements are in place, NICE guidance (see above) is being consistently implemented and check on the implementation of National Service Frameworks. The Commission will also act as a 'troubleshooter' in tackling serious problems regarding the quality of health care provision.

A National Survey of Patient and User Experience will help provide annual feedback to the NHS on the 'things that matter most to patients, carers, and service users'.

6.5 Other Elements of Reform

A number of proposals for joint change to the NHS and social services are covered in sections below.

7. Local Government Reform

- 7.1 A major reform programme of local government was set out in the White Paper **Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People**, issued by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions in July 1998. This was after consulting an a raft of policy proposals in a series of consultation papers.

New Political Structures

In an attempt to separate out the executive and backbench roles of councillors it is proposed that the committee system for making decisions within LAs be replaced by new models. The options include:

- A directly elected mayor with a cabinet
- A cabinet with a leader; and
- A directly elected mayor and council manager.

All councils except parishes will be required to prepare proposals for their own decision-taking arrangements, based on these models, and a timetable for their implementation. The responsibilities envisaged for the executive, council officers and the enhanced role of all councillors in relation to scrutinising decisions and acting as community representatives are outlined.

Improving Local Democracy

In an attempt to promote higher participation in elections and close and regular contact between a council and local people between elections it is proposed that:

- There is a duty on councils to consult local people on a number of issues [for example, when producing a community plan (see section on promoting the well-being of communities)]; and as part of the Best Value regime (see below).
- There are more frequent elections. All unitary councils will in future have elections every year and elect a third of the councillors in years 1,2 and 3. The fourth year is to be used for other elections. For example, for those who move to a directly elected mayor, such elections would take place then.
- Voting is made easier. Legislation will be introduced to enable councils to experiment in the way local elections are conducted (eg electronic voting, mobile polling stations, voting at different hours, on different days, or over a number of days, entire elections by postal vote). There will be no change to the voting system, other than the possible introduction of the supplementary vote for the election of directly elected mayors.

Improving Local Financial Accountability

In order to ensure that local people can have an impact on their council's spending and taxation decisions, it is proposed that:

- Universal capping is abolished, but that central government keeps reserve powers to scrutinise particular spending decisions.
- That there is more stability in council funding with a three year freeze after 1999/2000 on the method for calculating standard spending assessments. During this period research will be undertaken into how the current system can be improved.
- There will be no change in the system of council taxes, except in respect of council tax benefit subsidy paid to councils. A system will be introduced whereby a guideline increase in council tax will be issued. Council tax rises below this level would entitle the LA to council tax benefit subsidy. Increases above this level may mean that the LA may not receive the full amount of the subsidy with the shortfall being drawn from the LA's own funds.

A New Ethical Framework

Building on the recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, the White Paper sets out strict codes of conduct for councillors and council employees, with local standards committees and a Standards Board.

Improving Local Services Through Best Value

Best Value will be a duty to deliver services to clear standards - covering both cost and quality - by the most effective, economic and efficient means available. This duty is to be in all areas for which the LA is responsible. This new onus will replace compulsory competitive tendering. A Best Value Performance Management Framework is set out in the White Paper, which includes the: responsibility to consult in setting performance targets and measures; the requirement to undertake fundamental performance reviews; the publishing of local performance plans; the mechanisms for comparing performance and independent inspection; and the Government's powers to intervene wherever authorities fail to remedy clear performance failure.

Promoting the Well-Being of Communities

A central theme of LA reform is that at the heart of local government is its role in offering community leadership. To provide an overarching framework for local government in this respect, the Government intends to introduce legislation to place on councils a duty to promote the economic, social and

environmental well-being of their areas and to strengthen council's powers to enter into partnerships. It will be incumbent on councils to secure the development of a comprehensive strategy for promoting the well-being of their area.

There will also be scope to simplify the current statutory framework for councils that 'can demonstrate that they have the ability and capacity to manage greater freedom and wider powers'. The Government proposes to give 'beacon councils' greater scope to meet local needs and priorities.

Other Elements of Reform

Two other areas which are given consideration relate to capital finance and business rates. Of note are arrangements for making PFI partnerships easier and the statement that national business rates are to be retained, with limited local rates.

7.2 Social Services

Modernising Social Services (DoH, November 1998), sets out how the Government intends to improve social services provision across the country. The aims are: to protect vulnerable children and adults; co-ordinate care across agencies; increase flexibility so that services meet people's individual needs; clarify what services should be provided and what standards should be expected; reduce inconsistencies in provision across the country; improve the efficiency with which services are delivered. Particular new policy proposals include:

Adults

- Promoting independence - direct payments to individuals to pay for their care is to be extended to people over 65.
- Improved consistency - the Government will take the lead in setting down national objectives and priorities for social services. The Fair Access to Care initiative will set down consistent rules for how decisions are made on who gets care services.
- Convenient, user-centred services - a Long-term Care Charter will be developed and introduced and annual satisfaction surveys will have to be carried out by councils.

Children

Initiatives in this area are linked to others detailed elsewhere in this paper, many of which stem from the Children's Safeguard Review (see **Modernising Social Services** for the references to all the reports and the Government's response, including **Safeguarding Children**). Of particular note in this White Paper are the following policies:

- Protection - new inspection regime is to be introduced (see below).
- Quality of care - the Quality Protects programme is expected to 'transform the whole of children's social services' backed by £375 million of targeted extra money.

Improving Protection

Independent regulation arrangements for ensuring standards and safety for vulnerable children and adults are to be introduced. There will be eight regional Commissions for Care Standards, regulating a wide range of services. The services covered will include domiciliary care, small children's homes and council run homes for the first time. The care services will be monitored against national standards which will be developed and set down centrally.

The Workforce

A General Social Care Council (GCCC) will be established to set practice and ethical standards for staff. A national staff training strategy will also be developed to improve training levels.

Partnerships

Improved partnership working with health services will be promoted through the new flexibilities outlined in **Partnerships in Action** (see below). Arrangements to foster closer links with housing are also being pushed. Stronger children's services planning requirements are also to be introduced with the aim of improving co-ordination of services.

Performance Monitoring

Targets for quality and efficiency improvements will be set centrally, with a report to be published annually showing how each council performs.

Social Services Modernisation Fund

During the next three years an extra £3 billion will be made available to social services. Over £1.3 billion of this new money, the Social Services Modernisation Fund, will be targeted at achieving the changes outlined in the White Paper.

8. Health and Social Services

8.1 A discussion document has been published by the Minister for Health, setting out proposals aimed at removing barriers to joint working between health and social services. ***Partnership in Action (New Opportunities for Joint Working between Health and Social Services)*** [DoH, September 1998] sets out proposals to introduce legislation as soon as 'the opportunity arises' which will give increased powers to enable:

- (i) Pooled Budgets - health authorities and primary care trusts and social services to bring their resources together into a joint budget accessible to both to commission and provide services.
- (ii) Lead Commissioners - one authority to transfer funds and delegate functions to the other to take responsibility for commissioning both health and social care.
- (iii) Integrated Provision - an NHS Trust or Primary Care Trust to provide social care services beyond the level possible under current powers. Or a social services in-house provider to provide a limited range of community health services in contract with the NHS.

Increased powers are to be given with respect to the transfer of monies under Section 28A of the 1977 NHS Act.

Partnership in Action also sets out proposals to bring about closer working in terms of joint priorities guidance for both the NHS and social services; developing new performance frameworks; joint reviews of services at the interface; and consideration of how central bodies, such as the Commission for Health Improvement, Social Services Inspectorate and the Audit Commission, might jointly inspect services.

8.2 National Priorities Guidance

For the first time joint priorities and planning guidance were issued to the NHS and social services (***Modernising Health and Social Services: National Priorities Guidance 1999/00 - 2001/02***. DoH, September 1998). The overall strategy is aimed at: tackling the root causes of ill-health; breaking down barriers between services; ensuring uniform high quality standards and

maximising value for money; and making services faster and more convenient. Over the planning period an extra £17.7 billion for the NHS and £2.8 billion for Personal Social Services are to be made available to achieve these aims (see *Modern Public Services in Britain: Investing in Reform*, which details the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review).

As part of the financial settlement for the NHS, an element of the extra funding is to be ring fenced in an NHS Modernisation Fund of £5 billion. The monies will be targeted to achieve specified improvements in: waiting lists; mental health services; primary care; public health; education and training; and to fund priority areas for capital investment, including information technology.

For social services, increases in funding through a number of mechanisms, including increases in both Standard Spending Assessments and ring-fenced grants, will be focused on achieving improved outcomes and services in the following areas: services for children in need, and especially looked after children; community care; mental health services; and services to drug misusers.

9. Employment

9.1 The Treasury's *Employment Action Plan*, issued in October 1997, set out policies aimed at tackling unemployment, including:

- the part played by higher participation rates in education after the age of 16;
- Welfare to Work (see below);
- The importance of low non-wage labour costs;
- Product market reform and competition policy

The importance of striking the right balance to ensure that large sections of the population are not socially excluded in the pursuit for economic growth and efficiency within Europe was stressed.

9.2 Subsequently, the Department for Education and Employment issued in April 1998 an **Employment Action Plan** based on four 'pillars'. These were:

- Improving employability
- Developing entrepreneurship
- Encouraging adaptability in businesses and their employees
- Strengthening the policies of equal opportunities

9.3 **Employment Action Zones**

The setting up of Employment Action Zones by the Department for Education and Employment is linked with proposals designed to get people into work and reduce social exclusion. The Action Zones are geographically defined and aim to reduce unemployment by bringing together monies spent on benefit, training and other programmes, to be used more 'flexibly and innovatively'. The stress is on local partnerships and holistic solutions. A total of £58 million has been provided to run five 'prototype' Employment Zones. None are in the South East.

9.4 **National Minimum Wage**

A national minimum wage of £3.60 per hour has been set, which will not vary by region, industry or firm size. It will come into effect from April 1999. For younger members of the workforce (18-21 year olds) there is a lower rate of £3.00 per hour. Workers aged 16 and 17, and those on apprenticeships, will be exempt from the minimum wage.

9.5 **European Social Policy**

At the Amsterdam Summit in June 1997 the UK agreed to end its 'opt out' from the EU agreement on Social Policy (stemming from the Social Chapter of Maastricht). The Government views the Social Agreement as an 'opportunity to introduce fair minimum standards of treatment at work to which all employees are entitled'. The Government will also use its position to ensure that the Social Agreement develops to 'promote employability and flexibility - not high social costs' (see **What About Employment Regulations?** on the DTI's web-site). Four EU directives have so far been adopted under the agreement: the European Works Council Directive; the Parental Leave Directive; the Part-Time Workers Directive; and the Burden of Proof in Sex Discrimination.

9.6 Working Time Directive

The EC Working Time Directive sets limits on the length of the working day and working week and stipulates the minimum amount of paid annual leave workers should receive. Special cases are allowed, including some health care workers. The Directive came into force on 1 October 1998. It should have been implemented in November 1996, but was delayed by the previous Government.

9.7 Fairness at Work

The *Fairness at Work* White Paper was issued at the end of May 1998. This has been put forward as a 'package of measures for individual and collective rights, to address new patterns of work and the need to promote family friendly employment'. It contains proposals relating to the qualifying period for unfair dismissal, greater rights regarding complaints of unfair dismissal, trade union recognition, no upper limit on unfair dismissal awards, and an extension of maternity leave to 18 weeks to match maternity pay.

10. Benefit Reform

- 10.1 The arguments in favour of changing the benefit system are presented in *New Ambitions For Our Country: A New Contract for Welfare* (DSS, March 1998). The document then moves on to propose a framework for welfare reform, based on eight principles, along with a range of measures against which success is to be measured in future. The link with other government policy changes is made in the document, eg. The New Deal, Employment Action Zones, Minimum Wage.
- 10.2 An update on the reform process is contained within *Principles into Practice*, which documents new policies relating to the benefit system. Here it is reiterated that the key aim is 'work for those who can and security for those who cannot' with the accent on benefits going to those people in greatest need.
- 10.3 *Principles into Practice* is supported by two more detailed papers. *A New Contract for Welfare: the Gateway to Work*, details the Government's proposals to introduce a single gateway into the welfare benefits system, with the requirement that new claimants attend an interview where information on work, benefits and other government services are discussed. *A New Contract For Welfare: Support for Disabled People* is a consultation document on proposals for people of working age with a long-term illness or disability. It is stated that the system should focus on what people can do and offer help to maintain such individuals in the labour market (see section on People with a Disability)

10.4 Proposals for reducing the amount of fraudulent benefit claims was set out in the Green Paper, ***Beating Fraud is Everyone's Business***.

10.5 **Welfare to Work**

Gordon Brown Chairs a Welfare to Work policy committee which oversees cross department policy initiatives designed to get people off benefit and into work. A range of such have been proposed in various Budgets and separate policy statements. The various New Deals (see below) are from this strand of policies. The intention has been to fund Welfare to Work from the windfall tax levy on the former utilities.

10.6 **The New Deal**

As with all Welfare to Work initiatives, the aim is to move people from welfare into paid employment. Details of each New Deal are contained in a number of press releases and policy papers, a central source though is ***New Ambitions For Our Country***. A number of targeted New Deals have been set up:

New Deal for Young people:

From April 1998, on the basis of experience gained from 12 pilots, this New Deal was expanded to cover the whole country. It offers 18-24 year old participants four options:

- work with an employer who receives a job subsidy of up to £60 a week.
- full-time education or training
- work with a voluntary sector organisation, or
- work on the Environmental Taskforce

There is no option of remaining on benefit

The scheme includes a £750 grant to employers to provide training towards a recognised qualification.

New Deal for Long-Term Unemployed

This started in June 1998 for people aged 25 and over who have been out of work for more than two years. A job subsidy of £75 a week for employers is available for six months under the scheme. Accompanying this New Deal have been changes to benefit rules to improve access to full-time education or training. Pilots started in November 1998 to look at the impact of intensive individualised advice, counselling and help, plus special assistance for those aged 50 and over.

New Deal for Lone Parents

Pilot schemes for this New Deal have been running in eight areas since July 1997, and became available to all lone parents on Income Support from October 1998. The service is aimed at lone parents whose youngest child is at school, but is also available to those with pre-school children. The scheme has a number of dimensions but includes the provision that lone parents who leave benefit and enter the workforce will have their entitlement to benefits protected at the same rate for 12 weeks.

New Deal for Disabled People (see section on People with a Disability)

New Deal for Partners of Unemployed

Pilot projects in each region have been funded which seek to provide partners of unemployed people with expert, personalised help to find work.

New Deal for Communities (see section on Regeneration)

10.7 Older People

The paper *Building a Better Britain for Older People* (DSS, November 1998) details some of the initiatives and policies directed at improving services and support for older people in all government areas (eg in health and social services).

With respect to benefit changes, the Chancellor has signalled his intention to fund an extra £2.5 billion to provide:

- a guaranteed minimum income from April 1999 of £75 a week for single pensioners and £116.60 a week for couples, plus an annual payment to help with winter fuel bills;
- free eye tests and increased travel concessions.

Proposals are expected later on changing pension provisions. In particular, but not just for older people, pension sharing on divorce, reduced eligibility to a widows pension (although also to be available to widowers) and in relation to a second pension.

The Royal Commission on the Long Term Care of the Elderly is currently taking evidence. Set up at the end of 1997 it is expected to report by the end of 1998. The problems of funding long-term care are being considered, as are the unsatisfactory nature of certain aspects of the current system in terms of equity and fairness. Its recommendations are expected to be an important influence on future policies.

10.8 Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC)

This will replace Family Credit from October 1999. The aim is to reduce marginal taxation rates, which can be in excess of 100%. The WFTC will seek to ensure that every working family with a full-time worker has an income of at least £180 a week. No family with earnings of less than £220 will pay income tax.

10.9 Child Benefit

Child Benefit is set to increase from April 1999 (by £2.50) as is the child personal allowance for children under 11.

10.10 Child Support Agency

Proposals to reform the Child Support Agency are included in the consultation paper ***Children First: A New Approach to Child Support***. A full White Paper is expected in 1999.

11. The Women's Unit

The establishment of a Minister for Women and the Women's Unit are designed to ensure that Government policies 'knit together properly to take account of the interests of women'. What the Government believes it has achieved to date are detailed in the Women's Unit's document ***Delivering for Women: Progress So Far***. Nearly all of these refer to policies detailed under other headings in this paper (eg New Deal, Fairness at Work, National Childcare Strategy), as most policies have a great bearing on women's welfare. However, there are a number which are not listed elsewhere, which the Government believes will help. These include:

- developing a package of measures to address violence against women and improved protection of vulnerable witnesses in court proceedings (from the ***Crime and Disorder Act 1998***).
- draft legislation to allow pensions to be shared on divorce
- review of the pension system to help women provide for their retirement
- mixed sex hospital wards being phased out
- a new initiative 'to put the women's perspective into policy making'
- commitment to the principle that 50% of public appointments should be filled by women

- a Cabinet Sub-Committee on women, drawing together Ministers from across all major Government department's to put the women's perspective.

12. People with a Disability

12.1 A number of important policy changes have been set out which will impact on those people with a disability, some of which are highlighted in ***A New Contract For Welfare: Support for Disabled People.***

12.2 Benefit Changes

A total of £195 million has been earmarked in this Parliament for the New Deal for Disabled People. These monies will support pilots of innovative schemes for helping people with a disability, or long-term illness move into, or remain in, work. There will be funding for personal advisor pilots to co-ordinate help and support for disabled people and people with a long-term illness.

There have been policy statements stating the Government's intention to maintain the Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance as universal, national benefits for those who meet the entitlement conditions. There is expected to be reform of Incapacity Benefit, however, for new claimants, including the potential to clawback benefit where recipients also get a private pension or health insurance payment of more than £50 a week. Also new claimants must have made a minimum number of national insurance contributions in one of the last two years.

With respect to the assessment for benefit the All Work Test will be redesigned to consider 'people's capacity as well as their incapacity'.

The Severe Disablement Allowance will be increased for those disabled early in life. For those who have had the chance of working this allowance will no longer be available.

Disability Income Guarantee will be introduced for the poorest disabled people who need care both day and night, from a combination of their Disability Living Allowance and Income Support.

The non-means tested higher rate of mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance will be extended to 3 and 4 year old severely disabled children.

The Benefit Integrity Project is to be discontinued.

The Disabled Person's Tax Credit will replace the Disability Working Allowance, the aim being to 'provide more generous help and make more support available to more disabled people'. There will be a relaxation in the limits of the amount of work a disabled person can do without losing their benefit. Also benefit rates will be protected for 1 year, rather than the previous eight weeks, for those finding work.

- 12.3 A Disability Rights Task Force has been established to recommend the best way to secure civil rights for disabled people.
- 12.4 A Disability Rights Commission is to be established to 'protect, enforce and promote the rights of disabled people'.
- 12.5 The Government will implement the remaining provisions of the Disability and Discrimination Act. Key elements of this legislation have already been enacted, with a staggered timetable for implementation. Currently under discussion is the sections relating to ancillary equipment to allow disabled people more easy access to the workforce. Later provisions include physical access to buildings, which may have important implications for health care facilities.

13. Children

- 13.1 There are a large number of initiatives instigated by this Government which will impact on children and those responsible for their care and education. A number of these are reiterated in ***Supporting Families: A Consultation Document***, issued by the Home Office in November 1998. The section on Better Financial Support for Families reiterates details of other policy proposals which will impact on family income (eg Child Benefit, Working Families Tax Credit, New Deal for Lone Parents, Educational Maintenance Allowance and the proposed reform of the Child Support Agency). In the section on Advice and Support the two new proposals of note were the setting up of a National Family and Parenting Institute and a national Parent Helpline. The section Helping Families to Balance Work and Home considers policies relating to a 'basic, framework of family-friendly employee rights' and 'family-friendly employment practices'. The final section considers policies aimed at strengthening marriage.

13.2 Child Protection

Working Together to Safeguard Children sets out proposals for improving inter-agency cooperation with respect to children covered by Child Protection legislation and guidance. The consultation period for this initiative was between February and June 1998. Most of these proposals are picked up in ***Modernising Social Services***.

13.3 Children in Care

The aim of the Government's **Quality Protects** initiative is to ensure that local authority social services for children are well-managed and effective. Principally it is aimed at making sure that the right decisions are made about whether a child should be brought into care, or supported within the family and for those that are cared for that they benefit from the service. All local authorities are expected to submit a Quality Protects Action Plan to the DoH by 31 January 1999. Each authority is expected to detail their plans under 5 headings: the children; our aspirations; the services; their management; their governance. Under these headings a number of key tasks are highlighted including specifying:

- Which children in each community need help;
- The mechanisms for hearing the views of children and young people about these services;
- Objectives which lead to a clear benefit for children;
- How children are prioritised;
- How inter-agency strategies are being developed;
- Plans for extending choice to each child entering care and how care leavers up to the age of 21 can be supported;
- Quality assurance mechanisms.

In support of **Quality Protects** the Government has set out detailed objectives for social services for children, covering the 5 areas where plans are expected to be forthcoming. These make it clear what social service departments should be doing and how they will be monitored. **Quality Protects** initiatives are integral to proposals set out in **Modernising Social Services**.

13.4 Sure Start Programme

Over the next 3 years £540 million will be targeted, initially in 250 areas of greatest need, to support the physical, developmental and emotional needs of pre-school children (See **Comprehensive Spending Review**). Sure Start will bring together nursery, child care and playgroup provision with post-natal and other health services. Facilities will be developed to support such activities within 'pram pushing' distance of families, backed up by outreach services to offer support in the home. Key elements of the programme are:

- Every new mother will receive a visit from an outreach worker within 3 months of the child's birth;
- Parents will be offered counselling and help to prepare their children for learning and school;
- The scheme will be free to poor families and 'low cost' to better off families in the areas the programme will run.

13.5 National Child Care Strategy

A national child care strategy was outlined in *Meeting the Child Care Challenge* in May 1998. This set out plans aimed at improving the quality, cost and accessibility of child care, with £54m to be made available in 1998/9 to fund such initiatives. The strategy includes provision for:

- 20,000 places under the Out of School Child Care Initiative, boosted to 40,000 places next year.
- £2m for early years education and child care in Education Action Zones.
- £6m for child care grant to Early Years Development Plans.
- £5m for other training initiatives to encourage more training of child care workers and create more out of school child care provision.

There is a commitment by the Government to secure early education places for all 4 year olds. A consultation paper has been issued with respect to the regulation of Early Education and Day Care. There is also now a requirement that LEAs working with schools, voluntary and private sector providers in Early Years Development Partnerships, to prepare and publish Early Years Development Plans.

14. Educational Reform

- 14.1 Education is seen as a priority by this Government and a number of initiatives have been put forward, with the aim of improving educational standards in the UK and making 'a reality of lifelong learning' (see the *DfEE Strategic Framework*).

The major document outlining the reform package was *Excellence in Schools* (October 1997). This signalled the intention to inject funds to reduce class sizes to no more than 30 for 5 to 7 year olds and improve school buildings through increased capital investment.

Change was also been initiated with respect to:

- Implementing a ***National Numeracy Initiative***

This has a number of components including the stipulation that by Autumn 1999 all primary schools should teach a daily mathematics lesson of between 45 and 60 minutes to all pupils.

- ***National Literacy Strategy***

A number of initiatives designed to improve literacy, including agreeing literacy targets with each LEA, increased reading in primary schools, making 1998 the National Year of Reading, and target setting in schools. Also includes proposals with respect to adult learning (see below).

- Requiring ***Target Setting in Schools***

This relates to setting attainment targets at key stages of the national curriculum.

- Issuing guidance on how schools should develop 'open, fair and objective' admission policies.

14.2 Children with Special Educational Needs

The consultation document ***Excellence for all Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs*** (October 1997) sought views on improving the mechanisms for assessment and provision of services for children with special educational needs.

14.3 Life-Long Learning

The Learning Age put forward proposals to ensure lifelong learning beyond the age of 16 (published in February 1998). The original framework has been followed by individual policy papers which set out in more detail the nature of the proposals. These include:

- An increase of 500,000 places in further and higher education and consultation on proposed changes in the financial support arrangements for students.
- The setting up a University for Industry. This is currently being developed to improve the quality and availability of learning materials and widen access to these for individuals and businesses, in part through the use of multi-media. It will not itself deliver courses.

- The development of Individual Learning Accounts. These are saving accounts with financial institutions for use in purchasing vocational training. Account holders will receive local careers and guidance services offering information and advice about what and how to learn. The first million account holders will receive £150 against a contribution of at least £25 of their own money.
- The piloting of an Education Maintenance Allowance. This is designed for students aged 16-18, with the aim of replacing child benefit with a means tested benefit for those parents with children continuing their education beyond 16.
- The establishment of an Adult and Community Learning Fund. The Government has pledged £5m in 1998/99 for help with adult literacy and numeracy skills programmes.

14.4 Education Action Zones

The DfEE has set up 25 Education Action Zones (June 1998). These typically cover 2 or 3 secondary schools and their feeder primary schools in areas facing 'challenging circumstances in terms of underachievement or disadvantage'. Each zone is expected to operate on the basis of a partnership between local businesses, parents, schools and LEAs to raise standards of education.

A total of £75m will go into these Zones over the course of 3 years - £250,000 from business and £750,000 from Government per zone per year. Within the south-east the first wave included EAZs in: Basildon, Brighton, Croydon, Lambeth, Newham and Southwark.

15. Social Exclusion Unit

- 15.1 Initiatives planned for the Social Exclusion Unit are aimed at 'developing integrated and sustainable solutions for areas facing particularly severe problems, including crime, drugs, unemployment, the breakdown of communities and bad schools'. The Unit will also consider how central government departments can work together better to address social exclusion.
- 15.2 ***The Truancy and School Exclusion Report*** was the Unit's first report. It addresses the cause and consequences for pupils who drop out of school, as a result of both truancy and exclusion. A taskforce on Truancy and Social Exclusion has been set up to implement the Unit's report.

15.3 ***Rough Sleeping Report*** by the Social Exclusion Unit was published in July 1998 and made recommendations designed to address street living, with an aim of reducing the number of people sleeping rough to zero. A new Ministerial Committee will oversee implementation of the report, with the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions having operational responsibility, which includes co-ordination with respect to housing, but also health, access to employment, training and benefits. Funds for implementation were identified in the Comprehensive Spending Review.

As part of the proposals the DoH, in its response to the ***Utting Report***, announced changes to improve local authorities' support to young people in care beyond the age of 16 and make better preparation for independent life a priority (see ***Quality Protects***). This group of young people being particularly at risk of becoming homeless.

It is suggested that for London, where the problems are seen to be greatest, an integrated approach should be established under the direction of a new single body. The form of the new body is subject to consultation.

It is hoped that the New Deal will help many rough sleepers make the transition back into employment and therefore help them with their housing problem.

15.4 ***Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy For Neighbourhood Renewal***, published in September 1998, made recommendations to address the problems of the 'worst estates, including crime, drugs, unemployment, community breakdown, and bad schools'. The proposals set out make links with Sure Start, The New Deal, the various Action Zones and the Single Regeneration Budget. The strategy sets up 18 teams to develop 'joined up' answers to the problems the report highlighted. These will be tested through the New Deal for Communities.

The central elements thought to be needed in addressing the problems of worst estates are:

- investing in people, not just buildings
- involving communities, not parachuting in solutions
- developing integrated approaches with clear leadership
- ensuring mainstream policies work for the poorest neighbourhoods
- making a long-term commitment with sustained political priority.

16. Regeneration

- 16.1 The draft ***Regional Development Agencies Bill*** (December 1997) seeks to establish 9 Regional Development Agencies in England, including one for Greater London. These will have a number of responsibilities linked to urban development and regeneration. One major source of funding for which is the Single Regeneration Budget. 4th wave schemes are now under discussion, which have a Welfare to Work/New Deal focus. Projects were encouraged with objectives to minimise social exclusion.
- 16.2 A working paper was issued by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions in May 1998 asking for comments on a number of options with respect to whether, and if so, how the DETR should provide greater support for community-based regeneration initiatives (***Community-Based Regeneration Initiatives: A Working Paper***). Consultation on the paper closed in August. Coupled with ***Regeneration Programmes - The Way Forward*** these papers are an important source of information on the spectrum of funded initiatives, as well as examples of innovative schemes and options for the funding of such schemes in future. They also signal a move, as seen in the New Deal for Communities, towards more 'holistic' or 'comprehensive' regeneration schemes which emphasise community participation in problem solving, multi-agency working and the need to address a number of inter-linked problems to ensure regeneration is sustained over time.
- 16.3 Over £2.3 billion has been earmarked for a refocused Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) over the next three years. Larger funding packages to achieve the critical mass of activity required for regeneration will be available, with 80% of the total spend going to the most deprived areas. Successful bids must make explicit links with housing and regeneration and demonstrate how such initiatives fit with local strategies and those developed by the new Regional Development Agencies.

16.4 New Deal for Communities

The Government has signalled its intention to invest £800 m over three years in the New Deal for Communities. This will fund pilot projects targeted at the worst housing estates to bring together regeneration and housing programmes at a local level, enhance economic and employment opportunities and offer better neighbourhood management with decisions taken by the communities affected by them. These pilots are designed to inform the development of the full initiative and this Government's broader strategy on poverty and exclusion (see the Social Exclusion Unit report ***A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal***).

16.5 Local Agenda 21

Guidance on ***Sustainable Communities for the 21st Century*** was issued in January 1998. The setting up of the outlined Agenda 21 schemes are linked with urban regeneration, air quality, and transport. These offer a framework for environmental protection and sustainable local development.

17. Housing

- 17.1 The Government's long-term housing policy strategy has been sketched out by both John Prescott and Hilary Armstrong from the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions. It has been made clear that the overall aim is 'to offer everyone the opportunity of a decent home and so promote social cohesion, well-being and self-dependence' (***Housing and Regeneration Policy. A Statement by the Deputy Prime Minister***).

In her article, ***Principles of a New Housing Policy***, Hilary Armstrong makes an explicit reference to wanting to have a comprehensive housing policy that does not look at the sector by type of ownership, seeks to promote mixed types of housing, and gives a commitment to prioritise policies which help those least able to operate effectively in the housing market.

At a local level there will be a requirement for housing authorities to work closely with tenants, residents, people in housing need, businesses, lenders, housing associations, community and voluntary groups and other statutory agencies to develop comprehensive housing strategies. This must be based on a thorough assessment of local need and an appraisal of the best ways of using collective limited resources. Local councils will be obliged to develop housing strategies alongside their regeneration and other policies, with housing services ensuring Best Value for their communities. Other policies will in future be directed at developing new models of ownership and management for social housing.

- 17.2 The Capital Receipts Initiative allows the receipts gained from the sale of council houses to be used to improve and increase the public sector housing stock. This may help reduce homelessness and the availability of appropriate housing to allow people with particular needs to be supported in the community. Also, as these monies can be used in relation to energy efficiency, and in particular the provision of insulation, it may reduce ill health due to cold.
- 17.3 An extra £4.7 billion is expected to be provided for housing over the lifetime of this Parliament [this includes the £800 million allocated through the Capital Receipts Initiative (see above)]. A total of £ 3.6 billion will be allocated over the next 3 years to improve the public sector housing stock through the Housing Investment Programme. [The 1996 English Housing Condition

Survey estimated that in England there is a £10 billion backlog of renovation in the local authority housing stock alone]. A new Housing Inspectorate, under the auspices of the Audit Commission, will monitor spending in this area.

17.4 Housing Benefit

Changes to Housing Benefit rules may have two important implications:

- Low income families are no longer able to claim housing benefit which relates to any service charge element of their rent. This has important consequences with respect to supported housing, as the costs of staffing such accommodation cannot be claimed via this benefit.
- Payment of rents may in future be at or below the general level of rents for properties in the areas where the person has chosen to live.

18. Transport

The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Region's White Paper *A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone*, points to domination of privatisation and deregulation in transport policy in the last 20 years and the decline in bus and rail services and an over reliance on the car, partly as a consequence. A range of policies are therefore proposed designed to promote an integrated transport system, which takes into account the impact of transport on the quality of life and the environment. Integration in this context means improved interchanges and connections between the same types of transport (eg two bus services) and between different modes (eg bus and rail services). It also relates to intervention with respect to other policies, such as those relating to sustainable development and the environment. The aim of integration being to make public transport easier to use, more convenient and safer. The proposals include:

- Developing Local Transport Plans

Local authorities will be charged with drawing up Local Transport Plans, which will make better provision for pedestrians and cyclists; give priority to public transport; and pilot charging schemes to fund local improvements (eg including road user charging, levied on workplace parking to tackle congestion and pollution)

- Promoting Bus Quality Partnerships

These will be between local authorities and bus companies to make bus travel better and safer, thereby increasing passenger use and fares to create a virtuous circle for improving services and reversing the decline in the use of buses.

- Setting up a Strategic Rail Authority

The Government believes this will bring 'coherence to the railway system and ensure that it meets the needs of passengers and the freight customers it serves'. The aims being to see effective rail networks with simplified fares, better marketing, including more through ticketing and Travel Cards. Rail franchises may be re-negotiated to secure benefits and value for money.

- Development of a national public transport information system designed so that passengers have the information to plan seamless journeys.

- Introduction of maximum half price bus fares for older people.

- Revision of planning guidance to promote building and developments that reduce the need to travel.

- Better information, road maintenance and action on unscrupulous traders for motorists.

- Priority for road maintenance rather than new roads.

- Setting up a Commission for Integrated Transport

This will be charged with 'keeping up the momentum for continuing improvement' with respect to transport policy.

19. Air Quality

The **UK National Air Quality Strategy** was published by the previous Government, but the legislation and guidance for taking it forward have since been developed and put in place by the present administration. It includes provision for air quality monitoring and sets out responsibility for ensuring that the strategy is taken forward at a local level, via local authorities. The strategy is being reviewed this year.

20. Food Standards Agency

The Food Standards Agency: A Force for Change White Paper was issued in January 1998, consultation on which ended in March. The new agency will be separate from MAF and will be responsible for:

- Policy advice and legislation
- Research and surveillance
- General food law enforcement
- Public information and hygiene.

The agency will be given powers to take action across the whole of the food chain. It will be comprised of a 12 independent member Commission, supported by an executive staff. Its annual expenditure is expected to be in excess of £100m.

21. Ban on Tobacco Advertising

The Directive to ban tobacco advertising and sponsorship was voted through the Parliament of the European Union earlier this year (1998). The scope of the Directive is for all forms of commercial communication or of sponsorship, with the aim or effect of promoting a tobacco product, including the use of symbols etc without a product name, are to be banned.

Member states may defer the implementation of the above ban on advertising and sponsorship for:

- one year in respect of the press
- two years in respect of sponsorship

In exceptional cases and for 'duly justified reasons', Member States may continue to authorise the existing sponsorship of events or activities organised at world level (e.g. Formula 1 motor racing) for a further period of three years ending not later than October 2006, provided that:

- the sponsorship sums decrease over the period
- voluntary restraints are introduced to reduce the visibility of advertising at the events or activities concerned.

Exemptions will be internal tobacco trade communications; display and pricing of tobacco products at point of sale; advertising at point of sale; and publications produced outside of the EU and not principally intended for the EU market.

The Directive will form part of the national strategy to reduce smoking which will be set out in the forthcoming tobacco control White Paper which is expected to be published before Christmas 1998.

22. Home Office Initiatives

- 22.1 ***Getting to Grips with Crime: A New Framework for Local Action***, went out to consultation during 1997. It set out proposals for action to reduce and prevent crime and called for health service collaboration in relation to addressing some of the causes of crime, eg alcohol and drug misuse, as well as reducing crime within hospitals. It informed the subsequent ***Crime and Disorder Act 1998***.

In relation to the campaign to reduce drug abuse, an Anti-Drugs Co-ordinator has been appointed. One task he is charged with is to map the expenditures of all agencies involved in dealing with the problem, with a view to achieving a better balance between spending in different areas.

Proposals looking at how the Youth Justice system can be improved, with fast tracking arrangements have been out to consultation. This initiative has links with the anti-drugs policies above and with initiatives designed to improve parenting skills, which are to involve health service staff.

22.2 **Crime and Disorder Act (1998)**

The major elements of change, including the above, are set out in the mammoth ***Crime and Disorder Act (1998)***. This has 121 sections, a brief guide to which is available on the Home Office web site.

i. **Crime Prevention**

Of particular relevance to health and local authorities are Sections 5-7 and 17 of the Act, which set out the statutory obligations of each local authority and the police their joint responsibility to formulate and implement a crime and disorder reduction strategy in each district, borough or unitary local authority in England and Wales. It places a legal obligation upon police authorities, probation committees and health authorities to co-operate fully in this work.

The first step is to conduct a Crime and Disorder Audit, which should review the levels and patterns of crime and disorder. A three year strategy for tackling crime and disorder, including targets, must be developed, based on the analysis and the views expressed in the Audit.

ii. **Youth Justice System**

Sections 37-42 of the Crime and Disorder Act make clear that the aim of the youth justice system is to prevent youth offending and requires local authorities in partnership with other relevant agencies (Chief

officers of police, police authorities, probation committees and health authorities) to establish 'a local structure of teams and services to deal with young offenders and create a Youth Justice Board to monitor the operation of the youth justice system as a whole and improve standards'.

23. Legal Aid

Access to Justice with Conditional Fees. A Lord Chancellor's Department Consultation Paper, was issued in March 1998. This set out proposals to change the way Legal Aid is made available. In the short term, the proposals seek to move towards more conditional fee agreements, whereby lawyers only get paid for successful outcomes. Also, the Legal Aid budget is to be directed towards more 'priority areas' - helping people secure their basic rights. Over time there are other proposals which aim to limit the amount of monies paid out to lawyers through Legal Aid.

24. Democratic Renewal

24.1 Reform of the way in which the country is governed is a fundamental part of this Government's agenda for change. As discussed above, the process has been initiated within local government. In addition other reforms include those listed below.

24.2 Electoral Reform

The recommendations of the Jenkins Committee on how to improve the electoral system, including the method by which members of parliament are elected, were issued in October 1998. These included the recommendation to change the voting system to one based on a form of proportional representation. The Government is currently considering the proposals set out, with the option remaining open for a referendum on any proposed changes.

24.3 Reform of House of Lords

Fundamental constitutional reform of the upper house is being debated in both Houses of Parliament on proposals to abolish the voting rights of hereditary peers.

24.4 Creation of a Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly

Elections are currently being organised to set up a Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly which will introduce important elements of local decision making. Of great democratic importance, these changes will also have a profound impact on the NHS.

24.5 Northern Ireland

The agreement reached between the political parties in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland on Good Friday 1998 is profoundly important to the future peace, stability and government of the country. The agreement provides for the setting up of a Northern Ireland Assembly and various cross-border organisations.

24.6 Regional Government

Greater regional autonomy is being proposed for various parts of the UK, with the creation of a regional tier of government. The setting up of the Greater London Authority (see below) is seen as a forerunner to such developments.

24.7 The Greater London Authority

As a result of the referendum in May 1998, a new Greater London Authority is to become operational in 2000, subject to legislation. This will have profound implications for the areas of its proposed responsibility. It will not duplicate the role of the London boroughs or other public bodies, but may coordinate London-wide action. The Authority will have a general purpose to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of London. The GLA will also have a duty to promote the improvement of the health of Londoners, and to consider the health implications of its policies. Although it will have no specific responsibilities for health services, it can be expected to want to scrutinise health issues and liaison between the GLA and the NHS in London, via the NHS Executive Regional Office, will be important.

It is proposed that the GLA will be made up of a directly elected Mayor and a separately elected Assembly of 25 members. There will be two new functional bodies: Transport for London, and the London Development Agency; and two new authorities, the Metropolitan Police Authority and the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority. All of these will be accountable to the GLA.

The Mayor will prepare or approve strategies in a range of areas, including transport, economic development, strategic planning, air quality, waste, biodiversity, noise, and culture. The Mayor will be able to appoint two political advisors and ten other staff to his/her office. These may include a public health advisor.

(See *A Mayor and Assembly for London: The Government's Proposals for Modernising the Governance of London* for the full details of the White Paper).

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The majority of Government publications can now be found on individual department's internet web-sites. The easiest way to access all of these is through a central web-site, CCTA Government Information Service. The internet address is:

<http://www.open.gov.uk>

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Appendix

The Queen's Speech

1. Introduction

In the Queen's Speech at the State Opening of Parliament (Tuesday November 24th 1998) the Government's second legislative programme of its term of office was set out. This programme is important for those areas of reform listed in Part B of this document which require legislation to put them into effect. Information is therefore presented below on what has now been timetabled, and what has been left out.

2. The Legislative Programme

The Queen in her Speech made reference to the following:

- Legislation will be introduced to improve the regulation of financial services and markets, with a new statutory regulator, the Financial Services Authority.
- There will be legislation to promote electronic commerce and start modernising the law, improving competitiveness by enabling the UK to compete in the new digital marketplace.
- A Bill will be introduced to replace the NHS internal market with 'decentralised arrangements based on partnership, quality and efficiency to put doctors and nurses in the lead in shaping local services'.
- A Bill will be introduced to modernise the youth courts and to give greater protection to vulnerable and intimidated witnesses in criminal cases.
- The Government will introduce legislation to modernise legal aid and to provide for a Community Legal Service; and to make other changes to overhaul the justice system.
- A Bill will be introduced to reform benefits for people with long-term illnesses or disabilities, and benefits for widows, including, for the first time, provision for widowers. It will include the introduction of a single

gateway to the benefit system for those of working age. It will also make provision for pension sharing on divorce and introduce stakeholder pension schemes.

- A Bill will be introduced to establish Working Families Tax Credit and Disabled Persons Tax Credit.
- Legislation will be introduced to establish a Disability Rights Commission.
- The Government will introduce measures to promote partnership at work.
- A Bill will be introduced to transfer the Contributions Agency to the Inland Revenue.
- Legislation will be introduced to modernise local government in England and Wales.
- Legislation will be introduced to create a new Greater London Authority.
- Regional Development Agencies will be established in England.
- A Bill will be introduced to remove the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords.
- Legislation will be brought forward to provide a fair basis for water charging in England and Wales.
- Parliament will be given an opportunity to vote on the age of consent.
- A Bill will be introduced to modernise the law on immigration and asylum
- A Bill will convert the Commonwealth Development Corporation to a public-private partnership to increase investment in developing countries.

3. What Was Left Out

A number of important pieces of legislation signalled in Part B of this paper, have been left out of the legislative timetable, although in some instances there were references to drafts being debated. These include:

- Aspects of the Integrated Transport White Paper, including the plan to introduce road charging for motorists (with no draft bill planned). A limited experiment empowering the new Greater London Authority to introduce road charges and workplace parking levies could start in 2000.
- There will be a draft bill for a new Strategic Rail Authority. In the meantime a shadow authority could be set up.
- The necessary legislation to establish the new Foods Standards Agency will not go through next year. A draft bill is expected 'in due course'.
- A Freedom of Information Bill was missing from the Queen's Speech.
- The party funding proposals from Lord Neill's Committee on Standards in Public Life will not be taken forward next year, although a draft bill has been promised.