

**CONFIDENTIAL**

CH

THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

H(A)(86)2

Copy No

44

6 November 1986

CABINET

HOME AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SUB-COMMITTEE ON AIDS

Public Education Campaign

Memorandum by Secretary of State for Social Services

The paper (H(A)(86)2) by the Secretariat about the current situation on AIDS brought out the key role which public education must play in the fight to prevent its spread. This paper outlines proposals for developing the present public education campaign and seeks approval in particular for:

- (a) the setting up of a national body, funded by Government, to be charged with responsibility for the campaign;
- (b) distribution of an AIDS leaflet to every household in the country;
- (c) announcement of these steps by late November as part of Government statement on AIDS;
- (d) other steps in the public education campaign.

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Background

2. The Government is already committed to a £2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>m public education campaign running to the end of 1986/87. Expenditure has so far been largely on national newspaper advertising. The aim has been to explain the facts about AIDS - what it is, how it is spread and how to avoid infection, and also to dispel the myths causing unnecessary fears about how the virus can be transmitted. The presentation has been factual, sober and authoritative. There have been four rounds of advertising between March and October during which over 140 million copies of the advertisements have appeared. These have been aimed at the general public. Separate arrangements have been made through voluntary bodies to make more explicit advice and information available to those in particularly high risk groups - homosexuals/bisexual men and drug misusers. A general booklet on AIDS has been produced by the Health Education Council and widely publicised - several hundred thousand copies have already been issued and it is intended that copies should be on display and available from pharmacies.

3. The advertising campaign is being researched to assess public response, together with a parallel study of attitudes to AIDS and sexual behaviour. This is continuing. Early results were fairly encouraging. However there has been continuing criticism that:

- (a) the campaign has been too low key, the advertisements have lacked impact and have not been sufficiently explicit;
- (b) other means and in particular television advertising should be used;
- (c) overall the campaign is not measuring up to the seriousness and urgency of the problem.

4. A dilemma in this campaign is how to strike the right balance between on the one hand appearing to persecute the afflicted and on the other appearing to condone or encourage sexual licence and drug misuse. It is also necessary to retain credibility and avoid creating unnecessary panic by not exaggerating the risks whilst still making sufficient impact.

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

A Public Education Council for AIDS

5. Getting the balance right is a matter on which views will differ. For Ministers this can give rise to both moral and political difficulties. I have come to the conclusion that the right course is to take the direction of this campaign as far as we can outside the political arena whilst still clearly accepting that it must be fully funded by Government. I believe that this would be a more effective way of prosecuting this campaign than to continue direct Ministerial control. Such an approach will also be better suited to a campaign sustained over a period of years as unfortunately appears now to be inevitable.

6. I have considered whether any existing body might be invited to take on this responsibility. The Health Education Council is a corporate body set up under the Charities Act. Their membership is chosen by government and it is funded by government. It is the only serious contender and might appear to be a natural choice. But it already has a wide ranging programme of work and the magnitude, urgency and importance of the AIDS task makes it more important to have a special body dedicated to this task alone.

7. The note at Annex A gives a brief outline of possible remit, functions, membership, and related matters.

8. The Council Chairman will be a key appointment. Overall its membership will need to command confidence and respect across a wide spectrum of society.

9. The Council will need proper status. I propose that it should be established as a special health authority. Its formal remit would then extend to England (or England and Wales if Nicholas Edwards acted jointly with me) but by agreement it could effectively operate on a UK basis (without preventing separate Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish initiatives).

10. Funding will need to be determined but I would envisage a budget of £10m in the first full year.

**CONFIDENTIAL**



**CONFIDENTIAL**

Timing

11. The objective should be to establish the Council as soon as possible in the New Year. This is likely to mean working initially with seconded civil servants and from Government premises. I would wish however to announce this step along with other measures later this month.

Continuing the Campaign

12. It will be essential that we step up the public education campaign whilst the Council is set up. We must widen its scope beyond newspaper advertising. A quarter of the adult population do not regularly read a daily newspaper. I outlined in my letter of 21 August to the Lord President my proposal for a leaflet to be distributed to all households in the UK. Since then we have researched the concept and the proposed material and the results have been very positive. 93 per cent (out of 923) were in favour of the idea and the main messages were understood by a very high proportion. Over 60 per cent said it added significantly to their knowledge and 75 per cent that it would be effective in combatting the spread of AIDS. A text of the leaflet, substantially as tested, is at Annex C. It would be delivered in an envelope which would warn of the explicit contents.

13. To make its full impact the leaflet drop would need to be supported by advertising publicity, principally on TV. A decision now would enable the drop to go ahead by the end of February.

14. The fact that we are considering this possibility has been widely reported in the press and the expectation is that it will go ahead. It has received strong support in some quarters. I firmly believe that this is a step we should take which will both significantly assist the objectives of the campaign and give clear demonstration of the Government's resolve. The cost will be about £2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> million, including paid advertising. I am prepared to meet this cost if other Health Ministers are unable to contribute, though I would hope that they would do so.

15. Apart from the leaflet drop and attendant publicity we shall continue the newspaper advertising and will be actively pursuing diversification into posters, radio and possibly cinema advertising. Early steps, which I propose to announce in my November statement will include:

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

(a) wider distribution of the HEC booklet on AIDS - copies will be on display and available in pharmacies;

(b) developing a Campaign specifically aimed at young people

16. The expenditure related to the measures at para 15 will be contained within the £2m budget for public information for 1986/87.

Conclusion

17. I seek colleagues' approval for the following measures:

(a) the setting up of an AIDS Public Education Council as soon as possible;

(b) a leaflet drop to all households in the UK;

(c) announcement of these and other steps in a statement in the House in November. The text of the statement will be circulated nearer the time.

Department of Health and Social Security

6 November 1986

**CONFIDENTIAL**