

TBL 19

To: 1. Mr J Barnes IID
2. Mr A Lapsley PS/PS(C)

From: Nick Fahy IR2A

Date: 2 February 1996

Copies: Mr J Holden PS/SofS
Mr A Taylor PS/M(H)
Ms M Weatherseed PS/PS(H)
Ms L Woodeson PS/PS(L)
Mr T Rycroft Sp/Adv
Mr B Dyson PS/Perm Sec
Dr F Harvey PS/CMO
Dr J Metters DCMO
Dr Hangartner HCD-METS
Mr M Brown IR
Ms L Lockyer HP2
Dr A Rejman CA-OPU2
Ms L Hawksworth HCD-METS

Follow-up to meeting between Ministers and the Irish Health Minister

1. This submission follows the meeting between PS(C) and the Irish Health Minister, Mr Noonan, on Thursday 25 January. I am writing to provide a draft follow-up letter and aide-memoire of the meeting which PS(C) may like to consider sending to Mr Noonan.
2. The draft letter lists the four particular areas for cooperation which were agreed at the meeting between PS(C) and Mr Noonan: on the Hepatitis C look-back programmes; continuing cooperation on specialist medical training; on drugs issues; and on the EU High Level Committee on Health. The aide-memoire has been informally discussed with officials in the Irish Department of Health and they have no difficulties with its content.
3. The aide-memoire includes the relevant contacts within this Department, and cooperation with the Irish Department of Health will be taken forward at official level. The draft letter also gives Mr Barnes as a general contact point for communication between the two Departments on other issues.

Nick Fahy

IR2A

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DRAFT

Mr Noonan TD
Minister for Health
Department of Health
Republic of Ireland

Meeting 25 January

I am very glad that you were able to come to London on 25 January. It was a productive and helpful meeting, and thank you for advising us of some of your plans for your EU Presidency. I enclose an aide-memoire of the meeting - please let me know if there is anything which does not reflect your understanding of our discussions.

We agreed four particular areas for future cooperation: on the Hepatitis C lookback programmes; continuing cooperation on specialist medical training; on drugs issues; and on the High Level Committee on Health. The names and details of relevant officials here are included with the aide-memoire. As discussed, Jack Barnes will write to Mr O'Dwyer on communicable diseases - he could also act as our general contact point for communication between the two Departments.

I look forward to building further on our good relations, and my best wishes for your Presidency. If there are any areas in the future where cooperation would be useful, either bilaterally or multilaterally, we would be only too happy to help.

JOHN BOWIS

Aide-memoire

Meeting Thursday 25 January 1996 between Mr Noonan and Mr Bowis

Minister Noonan	Minister for Health, Ireland
Mr O'Dwyer	Secretary
Dr Tierney	Chief Medical Officer
Ms Kenny	Special Adviser
Mr Goodman	Private Secretary

Minister Bowis Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, UK

Dr Calman	Chief Medical Officer
Dr Metters	Deputy Chief Medical Officer
Mr Barnes	Head of International and Industry Division
Ms Lockyer	Head of Health Promotion (2) branch
Mr Lapsley	Private Secretary
Mr Fahy	International Relations branch

1. **Minister Bowis** opened the meeting by welcoming Minister Noonan and his party to London, and hoped that this meeting could build on the already good working relations between the countries at all levels, for example in the WHO. **Minister Noonan** also hoped that this meeting could build on existing good relations, and mentioned current work with the Northern Ireland Office to improve health for the whole island.

Blood

2. **Minister Noonan** then moved on to blood issues. There had been a number of incidents which had caused concern over blood safety in particular, and the Minister was aiming for progress under the Irish Presidency in taking forward work on blood following the Resolution on blood safety and self-sufficiency agreed by the Health Council on 2 June 1995. This would not mean major new initiatives, but rather starting a process towards European Union protocols on blood safety standards and self-sufficiency.

3. **Dr Metters** agreed with the overall objectives but also felt that these had to be achieved in the context of the evolving nature of blood safety questions and of differences in scientific views on these questions. The EU could build on work done by the Council of Europe, possibly in a binding regulatory framework. **Minister Noonan** agreed, and suggested that EU licensing regulation might also be extended to cover whole blood as well as blood products. It was agreed that it would be useful to exchange knowledge regarding the Hepatitis C lookback programmes underway in each country.

Specialist Medical Training

4. **Minister Noonan** introduced the question of the recognition of Irish medical qualifications. **Dr Tierney** said that on both main aspects of this issue (the recognition of Irish qualifications and easy movement for training) the principles had been established and only the details remained to be worked out - **Dr Calman** supported this. Both **Ministers** welcomed the work being done on this issue and the ongoing cooperation to ensure the functioning of the system in practice.

Drugs

5. **Minister Noonan** made clear that drugs issues will be a theme of Irish EU Presidency, and that in particular the Health Council would need to be acting (if it had not done so already) on demand-side measures. **Minister Bowis** agreed that it was essential to have measures on all aspects of drug misuse integrated and working together. In discussion, the following points were made:

- ecstasy was a central concern throughout both nations. Education was a key part of the UK strategy, action was being taken both in schools at general public awareness. The UK was commissioning research into this area and would be happy to share results with Ireland.
- there was a hard drug problem in Dublin and Irish authorities had been pointed toward Edinburgh as an example of a good approach. It was agreed that Edinburgh was a good point of reference particularly on needle sharing and involvement of GPs.
- the Irish Government was currently drafting a general memorandum on drugs issues, and it was agreed that it would be helpful for British and Irish officials to liaise and share expertise, including on possible external evaluators for the Irish Government to work with.

It was agreed that drugs would continue to be an area where Ireland and the UK should continue to cooperate.

International health matters

6. **Mr O'Dwyer** outlined the major health themes for the Irish Presidency as agreed at official level with the Commission;

- **blood**. As discussed above.
- **mental health and the elderly**. This followed signals of the importance of these issues from the European Parliament (particularly on the example of Alzheimer's disease). A conference might be organised to look at what steps could be taken.
- **the High Level Committee on Health**. The work on future direction and handling of EU health matters would be taken forward. The Committee might also be given formal status if the Commission Legal Services gave their agreement. **Mr Barnes** suggested that there were certain directions which would not be appropriate for discussion (such as health service provision rather

than disease prevention). It was agreed that Mr O'Dwyer and Mr Barnes would liaise to discuss these issues.

Future cooperation

7. It was agreed that both bilateral and multilateral cooperation should continue and this was welcomed by both sides. **Mr Barnes** mentioned the particular expertise in the UK on communicable diseases which could be used at a European level, and agreed to write to Mr O'Dwyer on this point.

Action

8. Particular areas for cooperation and further work agreed at the meeting were:

- exchanges of information regarding the Hepatitis C lookback programmes;
- ongoing cooperation on specialist medical training;
- exchanges of information on drugs issues, in particular on UK research and evaluation of action on drugs;
- discussion of the work being undertaken by the High Level Committee on Health.

The UK will also write regarding expertise on communicable diseases in the UK.

Department of Health

February 1996

Contact points on specific subjects

Hepatitis C lookback programmes	Dr A Rejman;	GRO-C
Ongoing cooperation on Specialist Medical Training	Mr Robin Naysmith;	GRO-C
Exchanges of information on drugs issues	Ms L Lockyer;	GRO-C
High Level Committee on Health	Mr J Barnes;	GRO-C