

*Hazel, we can make this a touch more informal
but are you generally happy with the content?*

Secretary of State

From: Hazel Blears
Date: 5 February 2003

GR-C:Rob

4/2/03

✓ This is fine
James
cc: Sammy Sinclair
Darren Murphy
Paul Corrigan
Simon Stevens
Rachel Dickson
Pat Troop
Mary O'Mahony
Vicki King
Charles Lister
David Daley

RECOMBINANT CLOTTING FACTORS FOR HAEMOPHILIACS: TIMING OF ANNOUNCEMENT

1. I understand that a decision on central budgets is fairly imminent. One of these budgets - for £13m/£21.7m/£53.4m - is to fund the cost of phasing-in recombinant clotting factors for adult haemophilia patients. This is a provision that Members of both Houses have long sought, and I believe there are advantages in making an announcement before this month's Recess. I gather that this is not a budget over which you have further questions.
2. It is two years since the Government was first petitioned to make recombinant products available to all haemophilia patients. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are already ahead of us, and late last year a report indicated that the UK had the lowest provision of these products among haemophilia patients in the developed world.
3. We are under pressure in the Commons to say whether we are going to introduce this measure, and there is growing impatience over the delay. An EDM, laid by Michael Connarty on 18 December has gathered 116 signatures. Michael is also pressing me for a meeting, which will need to go ahead next week whether or not a decision has been made. As we originally promised a decision before the New Year, credibility is wearing thin. I would therefore prefer to use the meeting to make an announcement, co-ordinating this with the issue of a press release and a statement in both Houses. The alternative will be for Michael and his colleagues to leave yet again with promises of an early decision and, no doubt, the suspicion that we are being less than honest.
4. A further advantage gained from announcing soon is that officials can get on with agreeing an implementation plan with key stakeholders. The earlier this process can start the sooner into the financial year patients can begin benefiting from the new products.
5. Are you content for me to press ahead with plans for an announcement next week?

HAZEL BLEARS