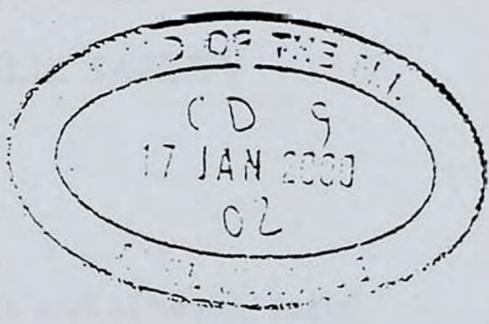


From: Bairbre de Brún
Date: 14 January 2000

To: First Minister
Deputy First Minister



PROGRAMME OF GOVERNMENT

1. I refer to your minute of 22 December 1999 asking Ministers to make a first contribution to the Programme of Government.
2. I attach a list of the key priorities in respect of my portfolio in health, social services and public safety.
3. In putting this forward, I should make the point that this is very much an initial scoping of the major issues before me. I am very much aware that it will be necessary to make some amendment in the light of developments in my thinking as I address the issues before me and as new issues and priorities emerge.
4. I should also point to the two main areas where I see cross-cutting issues. These are public health and public safety and I am very much aware that it will only be possible to achieve the necessary level of progress in these areas with the support and cooperation of colleagues.
5. I look forward to discussion and further consideration of this important area of work for the Executive Committee.

Bairbre de Brún
Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety



PROGRAMME OF GOVERNMENT

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Introduction

The following are the key priorities which need to be addressed in the area of health, social services and public safety. These are put forward without prejudice to any additions or amendments which may be required in the light of experience. Similarly, it may be necessary to adjust the priorities to address other pressures or areas of work which may emerge. Although not listed separately, the development of the work on the areas of cross-border co-operation and the need for longer term planning to secure the provision of effective high quality health and social care services are also key themes which run through the list of key priorities.

Key Priorities

1. **Modernisation of Health and Social Services**
Urgent work is needed to restore public confidence in our health and social services. This includes enhancing the provision of services, improving the quality of treatment for patients and clients, raising clinical and social care standards and replacing GP fundholding and strengthening the delivery of primary care.
2. **Winter Pressures**
Arrangements need to be put into place to address the problems which have emerged in respect of the Winter pressures. In particular, action will be needed on the availability and use of intensive care beds and the availability of care in the community.
3. **Improving Hospital Care**
An urgent review will need to be undertaken to develop a sound and defensible plan for the provision of hospital services. This will have to take account of problems West of the Bann and in other rural areas and look at the potential for co-operation with hospitals in other parts of Ireland.
4. **Structure and Organisation of Health & Social Services Administration**
Early action is needed to develop and implement a more streamlined structure for health and social services organisations.
5. **Improving Community Care**
There are major problems with the level of provision of care services in the community. Services to the elderly, children's services, residential child care, services for the learning disabled and services for the mentally ill all need to be improved. There is also a need for better support for carers.
6. **Cancer Services**
Cancer is a major disease here and survival rates are lower than in other European countries. Urgent action is needed to fully implement the cancer and palliative care strategies which have been developed.

Ambulance Service

A review of the provision of ambulance services has been completed and the report will be presented shortly. This will have substantial implications for the Ambulance Service and the key measures to improve responsiveness and the quality of initial diagnosis and treatment of patients will need to be implemented as soon as possible.

8. **Public Health**

The health status of the population here is amongst the worst in Europe. A new public health strategy will need to be developed and a programme of actions initiated. This is a cross-cutting issue and, if the strategy is to be effective, other Ministers and their Departments will need to be involved.

9. **Capital Development**

A programme will need to be developed urgently to bring the standards of the health and social services estate up to a safe and acceptable level. There will also need to be a strategic programme to bring much needed new developments on stream. This work is essential if the health and social services are to be able to provide the standards of facilities and service which the public expect.

10. **Public Safety**

A strategy will need to be developed to promote public safety. This is a cross-cutting issue and, if the strategy is to be effective, other Ministers and their Departments will need to be involved.

11. **Food Safety**

There has been a growing concern across Europe about the risks to food safety. With new arrangements being established to promote and act on food safety, a clear strategy will need to be put in place to guide and co-ordinate the work of the new bodies.