

## Government Mandate for the NHS

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health and Social Care Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons), Chair, Liaison Committee

The truth is that it is very difficult for the NHS to make plans without knowing what the Government's plans are for social care. We know, following a response to a question in yesterday's debate, that the Green Paper has actually been written. There is simply no excuse for the continued delay in its publication which would allow the House to scrutinise it and the NHS to be able to provide a truly integrated approach to health and social care. Just saying that it will be published soon is no longer acceptable. Will the Minister set out when we can expect to see this vital document, so that we can scrutinise the Government's plans?

Stephen Hammond Minister of State (Department of Health and Social Care)

The hon. Lady knows that the House and her Committee will have the fullest opportunity to scrutinise the document as and when it is published. She also knows that there is a commitment to publish it soon. She also rightly points out that it will deliver on the need to ensure that health and social care are integrated.

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Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health and Social Care Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons), Chair, Liaison Committee

On a point of order, Mr Speaker. When the Secretary of State comes to the Dispatch Box and makes a clear commitment that the publication date of the Green Paper will be before Christmas, and we know that the document has been written, what are the consequences of an absolute failure to honour such a commitment made at the Dispatch Box by a Secretary of State?

John Bercow Speaker of the House of Commons,

The consequences are political more than anything else. Quite what form that political consequence takes, if there is to be any, very much depends upon the view of the House of Commons; so the matter is the property of the House. I do not wish to incite strong feeling on this matter and the Minister has answered questions fully—whether to the hon. Lady's satisfaction or not is another matter—and courteously. There are proceedings that can be brought to the House, but those are rarely brought and they would require a written communication with me. If, for example, a Member thought that the behaviour were contemptuous of the House, it is perfectly proper to bring that to my attention and I would have to consider it very carefully. But my instinctive reaction is that the consequence is a political consequence in terms of what might be considered a negative opinion of the failure to honour an earlier commitment. We shall leave it there for now.

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