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## Meeting with Norman Lamb MP

### Chief Parliamentary and Political Adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister

**Time:** 4pm - Monday 24 October 2011

**Location:** Portcullis House, Houses of Parliament

**Attendees:** Norman Lamb, Niall and Ben



#### Purpose

1. The aim of this meeting is to update Mr Lamb on our progress with the DH on language assessment and on the review of the Directive.
2. We requested this meeting for Lib Dem Party Conference. Mr Lamb agreed to the meeting but we had to schedule it for October instead as his party conference diary was particularly busy.
3. Unlike our last meeting with him, the [Code A] and [Code A] will not attend this meeting.

#### Items for discussion

4. Update on the scheme developed with the DH on language assessment. To include discussion of the two main elements of this scheme:
  - a. New duties for ROs to ensure clinical and language competency
  - b. Additional powers for the GMC to assess the language competency of EEA doctors at the point of registration in cases when we have a particular concern
5. Update on the review of the Directive, including:
  - a. Current progress on the review of the Directive
  - b. Lords EU Sub Committee report on the Mobility of Healthcare Professionals

#### GMC contact with Norman Lamb MP

6. Niall and Ben met with Norman Lamb on 17 May, alongside the [Code A] [Code A] to discuss language assessment.
7. Our previous meetings with him include

- a. January 2010 - Paul Philip met to discuss the **Code A** case and the competency of doctors from the EU. They also discussed Jane Barton (Gosport War Memorial Hospital) and revalidation.
- b. June 2009 - Paul Philip met to clarify the GMC's FtP processes and to explain the GMC's position in the case of Dr Jane Barton.
- c. January 2007 - Graeme Catto met shortly after he was appointed Lib Dem Shadow Health Minister for an introductory meeting.

### **Norman Lamb' interest in language competency**

8. Norman Lamb has a long-running interest in doctor's language competency. He spoke about this issue many times while he was Lib Dem Shadow Health Secretary. His constituency of North Norfolk is near to where the Gray family are from.
9. In an article dated 14 December 2009 on the prosecution of Dr Ubani by the German authorities, Mr Lamb argued that 'the Ubani case should justify Britain suspending the system under which European clinicians can practise in this country without being tested first'.
10. By January 2010 Norman Lamb developed three main proposals for ensuring that doctors from the EEA are clinically competent and able to speak English:
  - foreign doctors wishing to work in Britain should have to undergo a national language and competency test
  - a suspension in one country should be effective across the EEA
  - it should be a criminal offence when a PCT allows a doctor to operate without ensuring they can speak English.
11. Of these proposals, he said: "we cannot allow a situation to continue where we are reliant on tired, overworked foreign doctors to cover out-of-hours care. Patients' lives are being put at risk because standards across Europe are not uniformly good and foreign doctors can practice in the NHS without a test of competence and language. Ministers have known for some time that the safeguards in place were not adequate but they have completely failed to take action. These proposals will ensure that every doctor working in this country can speak English, is familiar with our health service and is well trained."
12. The Liberal Democrat manifesto for the 2010 election said that they would "Make it illegal for a Local Health Board to allow a doctor to work in the UK without passing robust language and competence tests". As Shadow Health Secretary, Norman Lamb would almost certainly have been responsible for ensuring that this was in their manifesto.

## **Profile of Norman Lamb MP**

Lib Dem MP for North Norfolk since 2001. During this time he has held the following posts:

- Chief Parliamentary and Political Adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg (2010 – present).
- Former Shadow Secretary of State for Health (2006-10).
- Former Shadow Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (2005-06).
- Former spokesperson for the Treasury (2002-05)
- Former spokesperson for international development (2001-02)

In this current role he is effectively the liaison officer in charge of relations between the two parties as well as Nick Clegg's eyes and ears in the House of Commons.

Mr Lamb won his North Norfolk seat narrowly on his third attempt in 2001. He increased his majority in 2005 and again in 2010. His current majority is 11,626.

Prior to his election he worked as a solicitor specialising in employment law and was a local councillor.

### **Contact on the day:**

You should wait in the reception area of Portcullis House after asking the reception to call his office.

If you need to contact his office on the day their number is 020 7219 0542.