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original file copy is with
the Political office.

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

23 December 1981

Dear Councillor Gill,

Thank you for your letter of 13 November about nurses' pay. I can give you my assurance that this Government values very highly the work and dedication of nurses, and there is no question of taking them for granted in any way.

I enclose a note which sets out what we have done for the nurses since we took office. You will see that there are now the equivalent of 21,000 more full time nurses, and that the pay bill for nurses has gone up by about 76%. I should add that we have, too, increased spending in the National Health Service by 5% in real terms since 1978-79.

The representations the nurses are now making are for a long term pay agreement. We have had discussions with both sides of the Nurses and Midwives Whitley Council with the aim of setting up both this and an improved career structure for nurses. Dr. Vaughan wrote in August 1980 to both sides of the Whitley Council, and since then he and Norman Fowler have met their representatives. I myself met the Staff Side representatives on 18 December, and gave them an assurance, which I am happy to repeat to you, that it is the Government's intention to have a long term agreement on pay with the nurses which will work and which the Government can afford.

In short, we are doing our best for the National Health Service, and for nurses and midwives. I believe it is a very good best.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

Councillor Harry Gill

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National Health ds

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

23 December 1981

Dr. Vaughan wrote to Derek Howe here on 16 December enclosing a draft reply*which the Prime Minister could send to Councillor Gill's letter of 13 November.

I attach the letter which the Prime Minister signed, which might, perhaps, serve as a model for future letters (no doubt there will be very many of them) on nurses' and midwives' pay. This is, in fact, the version I read out to you over the phone and which you kindly vetted.

M. C. SCHOLAR

David Clark, Esq.,
Department of Health and Social Security.

* re letter to PM from Clr. Harry Gill -
papers in PO

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GRY /
M type
for PM

10 DOWNING STREET

~~Mr Vercher~~

~~ACS~~
How about this?
J.

Nurses pay

What a terrible draft letter this
is!

Given the importance of the subject do
you think you might utilise yr presence
at Friday's mtg to scrutinise the
draft - which, after all, wd then be the
model for many 100's of letters, from
here & from DHSS?

Ms 22/12 ??

(and it can make the 4 points) Wm 22/12



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY
ALEXANDER FLEMING HOUSE
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From the Minister for Health

PO(MIN-H)PM2715/42

Derek Howe Esq
Political Office
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

Original in Political Office

1600 December 1981

Dear Derek

Thank you for your letter of 19 November enclosing a letter from Councillor Harry Gill.

I enclose a draft reply which the Prime Minister may care to send to Councillor Gill.

DR GERARD VAUGHAN

ENC

PO(MIN-H)2715/42

DRAFT REPLY TO COUNTY COUNCILLOR HARRY GILL

Thank you for your letter of 13 November about nurses' pay.

I can give you my assurance that this Government values very highly the work and dedication of nurses, there is no question of taking them for granted in any way. The negotiation of nurses' and midwives' pay and conditions is normally undertaken by the Nurses and Midwives Whitley Council. From the letters received it is clear that it is one on which people feel very strongly.

I know that there are problems about the maintenance of nurses' pay at levels both they and the community at large will see to be fair, but a great deal of progress towards solving the problems of nurses' pay has been made mostly since this Government took office. I enclose a note which sets out what has been done on this since we took office.

For the future, we have had discussions with both sides of the Nurses and Midwives Whitley Council with the aim of setting up not only an improved career structure for nurses and midwives but also a formal method for determining nurses' pay. Dr Vaughan began his campaign to try to improve nurses' pay for the longer term in August 1980 when he wrote to both Sides of the Whitley Council. Confidentially it was a year before the Staff Side could respond, but since then he has met representatives of both Sides of the Whitley Council and further progress was made when the Secretary of State met the Staff Side of the Whitley Council on 10 December to discuss the way of determining nurses and midwives pay in the future. On that occasion I believe there was constructive discussion about the procedure and timetable for taking matters further, and I will also be ^{meeting} ~~meeting~~ Staff Side representatives myself on 18 December.