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*Dear Richard,*

18 NOV 2010

### **Public Bodies Reform Bill**

I am writing at the request of my colleague Lord Taylor of Holbeach, Bill Minister for the Public Bodies Bill in the House of Lords. Lord Taylor informs me that you raised a specific point regarding the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) during 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading of the Bill on 9 November, and has asked me to respond in detail.

During the debate, you pointed out the need for a careful analysis of the costs and benefits of transferring the functions of the HFEA to other bodies, and pointed out that the HFEA is already moving towards lighter-touch regulation, and has plans to make savings in both running costs and staff.

The government's approach is about streamlining and simplifying the regulatory landscape not just about making cost savings. We envisage that the streamlining of regulation and reduction in the number of regulators should set up a less burdensome and less bureaucratic system for the NHS. For example, out of 102 centres that currently require treatment licences from the HFEA in England, around 80% also require a licence from CQC or are in premises that do so.

Our position is that it is increasingly difficult to justify the continued separation and parallel operation of the HFEA's function as a regulator of infertility treatments, which many people these days regard as standard medical procedures, from this mainstream regulatory structure for healthcare.

We envisage a range of potential financial benefits in transferring functions to the CQC. The HFEA is a relatively small organisation that has its own dedicated human resources, information technology, accommodation and communication staff, reflected in the Director-level senior management team, and a Chief Executive's salary more than that of the Prime Minister. Transfer of the HFEA's infertility treatment licensing function to the CQC would enable consideration of rationalisation in these areas to take place.

I can assure you that when we have drawn up more detailed proposals for both the HFEA and HTA we will share these widely and engage with all those with an interest to hear views about the proposal. At that time we will be undertaking an impact assessment.

I am copying my response to Lord Taylor of Holbeach, and will be placing a copy of this response in the House of Lords library.

*Yours ever,*

*Freddie*

**EARL HOWE**

c.c Lord Taylor of Holbeach