New cover

PART ONE

MT

Confidential Filing.

Review of Administrative Forms

GOVERNMENT MACHINERY
PART 1:
September 1980

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
24/7/85 31. 10. 86 PT 1 6 NOS							

PREM 19/1771

Dd 8398366 2M 11/83 JET

Feb '83 progress report
+
Third Progress report in folder
at back of file.

PART 1 ends:-

PAB to PM 31/10/86

PART 2 begins:-

PAB to J. HIBBERT 3/11/86

Published Papers

The following published paper(s) enclosed on this file have been removed and destroyed. Copies may be found elsewhere in The National Archives.

To be published by Cmnd. 8504 – Administrative Forms in Government. Presented to Parliament by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster by Command of Her Majesty, February 1982. Published by HMSO. IBSN 0 10 185040 9

Signed J. Gray Date 17/9/2014

PREM Records Team

E.R.

PRIME MINISTER

MARKETING OF CSO DATA IN COMPUTER READABLE FORM

You wanted to see Policy Unit views on the proposal in Mr. Hibbert's minute. A note by John Wybrew is attached. They agree that you should support Mr. Hibbert's proposal, but suggest that CSO should aim to sell "at cost" since the real benefit here is making the information available as widely as possible.

It is not that usual for a Government Department to propose a scheme which makes money, and it would seem a little odd to actually discourage this.

Agree to Mr. Hibbert's proposal? Yes

MT

PSB

P.A. BEARPARK
31 October 1986

ECL/02

PRIME MINISTER

31 October 1986

MARKETING OF CSO DATA IN COMPUTER READABLE FORM

CSO data compiled in computer readable form is a valuable national resource. Properly analysed and interpreted, it contributes to better decision and policy-making in the business sector and in the public domain.

The existing arrangements for disseminating this data are based on the wrong priority - minimising the cost of the activity to the CSO. But the cost - £10,000 pa - is trivial in relation to the potential benefits from disseminating the data widely, and ensuring that the underlying assumptions and the limitations of accuracy are fully appreciated by analysts. This is best achieved by giving back to the CSO the responsibility for the widest dissemination of accurate, properly-understood data.

We recommend that you should support Mr Hibbert's proposal. You could query why the CSO should want to obtain a margin above the direct cost when the real benefit lies in maximum dissemination.

JMW

JOHN WYBREW

E.R.

PRIME MINISTER

MARKETING OF CSO DATA

Mr. Hibbert proposes that CSO should in future market their data directly, instead of through a commercial computer bureau as at present. It is clear that there are problems with the existing system, but you may feel that CSO does not necessarily possess all the commercial knowledge required for a successful marketing exercise.

Content to agree with Mr. Hibbert's proposal, but ask him to pursue the possibility of involving a marketing agency, perhaps on a commission basis for sales over a certain volume?

Ask the Policy Unit to advise

No

PAB

P.A. BEARPARK
30 October 1986

EL3BMO

CCBS

THE PRIME MINISTER

MARKETING OF CSO DATA IN COMPUTER READABLE FORM

You may wish to know about a development to improve the marketing of the data we hold in the CSO in computer readable form.

We already make computer readable versions of a great deal of our data available to the public. The process by which we do this is to release tapes to a commercial computer bureau which acts as our agent in selling the information to customers who may be individuals but are in general other computer bureaux. The bureaux take the tapes from the agent with a view to selling more complex value-added services to final customers. It was intended that the agent bureau should market the product, make available different packages or selections of tapes which customers want, and deal with any day-to-day problems arising in the provision of this service.

This system has not worked very well. We have had a number of complaints about timeliness, the quality of the data and the fact that the agent is also itself a commercial bureau with its own customers, which to some people seems to give them an advantageous position. In addition, because the agent is not fully conversant with our data, we quite often end up having to deal with problems raised by customers of the agent.

Our experience with the present arrangements suggest that we have been expecting the agent bureau to perform some functions which only we are in a position to do. We therefore propose to cease to operate exclusively through an agent bureau, and to supply

tapes ourselves direct to any computer bureau or other customer who wants to have them. We would prepare the tapes to a standard format. Individual customers and computer bureaux including, of course, the existing agent in its capacity as a bureau, would be invited to purchase the tapes direct from us. They would then, as now, be in a position to repackage the data for their final customers. We believe that this will be more efficient and will lead to greater use of our material in this form by a great number of people.

There will be some expenditure (of the order of £10,000 a year) involved, but it can be contained within the CSO's current gross running costs. Government expenditure will not increase and there will be additional revenue generated for the Central Statistical Office which we are confident will be significantly greater than the extra costs of providing the service (our best estimate is an additional £40,000 a year). Net public expenditure will thus be reduced.

While we are confident that we and the customers at large will welcome and will benefit from these new arrangements, I propose to review them in about a year's time and report the outcome.

I have discussed these plans with Sir Robert Armstrong and he has endorsed them.

Jack Hibbert

J HIBBERT

28 October 1986

File

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

24 July, 1985

Dear Private Secretary

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS: THIRD PROGRESS REPORT

The Prime Minister has asked me to send you the enclosed copy of a report by the Cabinet Office (MPO) on progress made in the third year of the follow-up to the review of administrative forms.

The report shows that the foundations for making improvements in forms design and control have been laid in departments, and that they are producing good results. The Prime Minister notes that some departments are at a more advanced stage than others, and that major achievements have been made where Ministers and senior management have shown personal interest and support. She is concerned that efforts to review and improve forms should not flag. Forms reflect on the efficiency of the Government's administration. Effective and efficient forms reduce the burden on the public and on business and industry, as well as improving efficiency in departments.

The Prime Minister endorses the progress report and hopes that Ministers will continue to call for regular reports on progress of forms review in their departments. She has asked Cabinet Office (MPO) to continue to monitor achievements and let her have a short report in two years time which would take stock of the continuing progress being made.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries of Ministers in charge of departments, Paul Thomas (Lord Gowrie's Office), Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office) and Andrew Jackson (Efficiency Unit).

Yours ever

Mark Addison

(Mark Addison)

The Private Secretary

MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF DEPARTMENTS

The following is the list which is confirmed by MEA:

Cabinet
Law Officers Deparatent
Lord Advocates Department
Financial Secretary, HMT
Economic Secretary, HMT
Minister of State, HMT
Overseas Development
Minister of State, FCO (Rifkind)
Minister of Housing, DOE (Gow)

25 June 1985

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

22 July, 1985

THIRD PROGRESS REPORT OF THE REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

The Prime Minister has seen your Minister's minute of 16 July. She has endorsed and welcomed the report and agreed that I should write round to Departments accordingly.

She has also agreed not to call for a fourth progress report next year, and that the resources of the Central Forms Unit should be reduced to a level to enable it to exercise a broad monitoring role. She has, however, asked for a brief report in two years time which would take stock of the continuing progress being made.

(Mark Addison)

P. Thomas, Esq.,
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's
Office.

NC

PRIME MINISTER

THIRD PROGRESS REPORT OF THE REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

Lord Gowrie has submitted the attached report (Flag A) for your approval. His covering minute explains that the momentum in Departments for reviewing forms has been maintained and he recommends there is no need to call a further review next year. He suggests the Central Forms Unit should be much reduced and now adopt a broad monitoring role only.

The report presents an encouraging picture of continuing progress in weeding unnecessary forms and improving the rest. Lord Gowrie's suggestion that there should be no review next year seems sensible though you may like to suggest that a brief report should be provided in two years' time to take stock of the continuing progress being made.

You will see that Lord Gowrie considers that you do not need to wade through the full report. I have flagged up the summary of the main conclusions, and the more interesting "before and after" examples which you may like to look at.

Content to endorse the report and, in particular, the draft Private Secretary letter at Flag B? Yes MT

Content there should be no similar report next year and that the role of the CFU should be much reduced? Would you wish to ask for a brief report in two years' time on continuing progress? Yes - thankyou MT

Mark Addison

Mark Addison
18 July 1985

MJ2AVL

B

DRAFT LETTER TO PRIVATE SECRETARIES OF MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF DEPARTMENTS

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS: THIRD PROGRESS REPORT

The Prime Minister has asked me to send you the enclosed copy of a report by the Cabinet Office (MPO) on progress made in the third year of the follow-up to the review of administrative forms.

The report shows that the foundations for making improvements in forms design and control have been laid in departments, and that they are producing good results. The Prime Minister notes that some departments are at a more advanced stage than others, and that major achievements have been made where Ministers and senior management have shown personal interest and support. She is concerned that efforts to review and improve forms should not flag. Forms reflect on the efficiency of the Government's administration. Effective and efficient forms reduce the burden on the public and on business and industry, as well as improving efficiency in departments.

The Prime Minister endorses the progress report and hopes that Ministers will continue to call for regular reports on progress of forms review in their departments. She has asked Cabinet Office (MPO) to continue to monitor achievements.

I am copying this letter to the private secretaries of Ministers in charge of departments, Paul Thomas (Lord Gowrie's Office), Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office) and Andrew Jackson (Efficiency Unit).

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

CF
pps please

PRIME MINISTER

THIRD PROGRESS REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

I attach the third progress report on the review of administrative forms.

The report is rather bulky, consisting of a main progress report and two separate annexes. I suggest you need only read the short summary at the beginning of the main report and dip into the remainder of it. The Annex on Forms design (Annex 1) gives some interesting examples of forms which have been improved over the past year including a number in which legal language has been simplified. These illustrate vividly the commitment there now is to produce better forms where these are necessary. Good examples are the Department of National Savings form for applying for Government stock; DTI's application for regional selective assistance and DoE's Notice claiming the right to buy council houses.

Flagged up for ease of reference.

The report shows convincingly the excellent progress that has been made in improving forms design and control in Government since the Government's White Paper published in 1982. These improvements back up the report's conclusion that we can expect progressively better forms in the future.

The report makes two main points:

- the momentum of the review has been kept up. 74 per cent of all forms used by the public and business and industry have now been reviewed since 1982, some more than once. 15,400 types of forms have been scrapped which represents about 1 in 6. 20,900 have been significantly improved and 45,100 have been declared satisfactory. 15 of the 25 departments covered in the report have either completed reviews of all their forms, or will have done so within the year. Departments have now established review programmes which will ensure that the momentum is kept up in future; and

- the Government can expect lasting improvements in Forms Design and Control across the Civil Service. Cabinet Office (MPO) have audited the forms design and control procedures in Government departments against standards of best practice laid down in management guidelines. This exercise has shown that these standards have taken root in departments and are producing good results. Success has been due to a large extent to the continuing direct interest in forms work by Ministers and senior management.

I think that you will want to welcome the report and send it to Ministers in charge of departments. I attach a draft private secretary letter for that purpose. There continues to be much interest in our work on improving Government forms and if you endorse the report, I will arrange for it to be sent to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and to be published.

I recommend also that you do not call for a fourth progress report next year. I doubt strongly whether such a report would uncover any new information. Forms design and control procedures are in place and working well. I intend to reduce the resources in the Central Forms Unit to a level which will enable it to exercise a broad monitoring role to ensure that efforts in departments do not flag. Last year the Unit cost around £60,000; this year I expect the cost to be just over £6000.

The attached report was called for in last year's progress report which you endorsed. It is two months late because the head of the Central Forms Unit in Cabinet Office (MPO) was taken seriously ill earlier in the year.

GOWRIE

16 July 1985

GOVT MACH: Review of forms: Sept. 80

fe vc

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

3 July 1985

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

I note from our files that the Prime Minister asked Lord Gowrie to commission a short progress report from the Central Forms Unit in April this year to take stock of the improvements in forms design and control.

Perhaps you could give me an idea of where matters stand?

(MARK ADDISON)

Paul Thomas, Esq.,
Office of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

MEA

Please see D Barclay's note on Lord Gowrie to S/S DHSS 15/5/84

We have contacted Lord Gowrie's office several times but they are not even returning our calls now.

Do you wish to call them yourself for state of play?

Margo

3/7.

Caxton House Tothill Street London SW1H 9NF
Telephone Direct Line 01-213 6400
Switchboard 01-213 3000

Lord Gowrie
Minister of State
Management and Personnel Office
Great George Street
LONDON SW1P 3AL

18th June 1984

Dear Greg

ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS REVIEW

Thank you for your letter of 15 May enclosing Management Guidelines on forms design and control.

I am glad to say that most of what the Guidelines recommend is already standard practice in my Department. As you will have seen from our contribution to this year's report to the Prime Minister, good progress is being made here with the forms review. To ensure that the momentum is maintained, a steering group of senior managers has been given the task of monitoring the review, and regular progress reports are made to this group by the DE Forms Unit, which is co-ordinating the Department's review effort. In addition, of course, the review has the full support of DE Ministers.

I thought you should know, however, that I have some reservations about two matters arising from the Guidelines. I am concerned about the resources that would be needed for the level of testing which the Guidelines advocate; and, more generally, that the MPO arrangements for evaluating the Guidelines seem to involve an excessive amount of control from the centre over departmental business. My officials have written to yours about these points.

Copies of this letter go to those who received yours.

Yours
Tom

GOVT MACH. Admin forms
Sept 80

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SWIH 9AT

DMB
12/6

12 June 1984

Dear David,

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

Thank you for your letter of 29 May and the copy of the second report to the Prime Minister on the progress of the review of forms.

An annual report on the review of forms in the Home Office was put to the Home Secretary in April. He noted the progress that has been made on Home Office forms and was content for the report to be sent to MPO. He has also written today to Lord Gowrie confirming that we will look at the practices and procedures in the Department to ensure that as far as possible they are in line with MPO guidelines on forms design and forms control.

Yours ever,
Nigel

N A PANTLING

David Barclay, Esq.

Gov. Thurs
Review of Forms
9/20

QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

12 June 1984

Dear Gowrie,

FORMS

Thank you for copying to me your letter of 15 May to Norman Fowler and the two new management guidelines on forms design and forms control.

I understand that our Departments are already in touch at official level about arrangements for monitoring the use of the guidelines in order to keep you informed of progress and to show the extent to which the general principles have been taken into the permanent procedures in Departments. My officials will be looking at our procedures and practices on forms to ensure that they are in line with the guidelines as far as possible.

Yours

Leon

Lord Gowrie

Gov. mtg
Review of family
9/80

820

CABINET OFFICE

From the Minister of State

Lord Gowrie

MANAGEMENT AND PERSONNEL OFFICE
Great George Street
London SW1P 3AL
Telephone 01-233 8610

The Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP
Secretary of State for Social Services
Department of Health and Social Security
Alexander Fleming House
Elephant and Castle
London SE1 6BY

nbpm
Due 31/5

30 May 1984

Dear Norman,

PLAIN ENGLISH BOOKLET

You may have seen some Press reports recently that the Cabinet Office (MPO) have sent out a leaflet to their staff encouraging the use of plain English. I thought you might like to see a copy. The booklet was written by the Plain English Campaign for MPO. You might find the idea of a similar booklet for your department worth considering as one way of showing your personal support for the forms review.

Some departments have already issued guides on forms design which include advice on writing. But whilst these are helpful to staff who are already trying to write well, they are, I gather, often not read by those who most need the advice. And I understand that forms units sometimes have to convince the form sponsor in the policy or operational division of the need to write simply and clearly before they can get down to designing a form.

The purpose of this booklet is to arouse interest in plain English across the department and to show that it has top-level support. It also provides a good opportunity to draw attention to what the department is doing on forms. The booklet has been welcomed by heads of divisions in MPO who have been asked to follow it up with their staff.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the need to alter the example quoted on page 4 was challenged immediately and you might like to see the alternative version. This has been accepted by the responsible division. I think it makes the point of plain English rather well!

/I am

I am copying this letter to other Ministers in charge of departments and I hope they too will consider whether a similar booklet would be appropriate for their departments.

Yours,

MT

LORD GOWRIE

REVISED DRAFT OF FIRST PARAGRAPH OF THE CODE INTRODUCTION

The Minister for the Civil Service has authority to introduce regulations to direct the conduct of the Home Civil Service. (Article 5 of the Civil Service Order in Council 1969.)

These regulations come mainly from the following sources:

- legislation which applies to all employers including the Crown;
- legislation which does not apply to the Crown but which Ministers have agreed to apply as if it did; and
- agreements negotiated with the National Staff Side or with Staff Associations.

They are consolidated and communicated to departments in the form of instructions by means of the Code memoranda.

Departments employing civil servants must follow the instructions. Sometimes the Code specifies how they must be followed; sometimes it states the principles behind the instructions and allows discretion to departments on how to apply them.

The word is...

PLAIN ENGLISH

So far we've asked you to read only five words and look at a coat of arms.

Maybe it took you five seconds. We'd like just another ten minutes of your time to read the rest of this booklet.

That's a small cost to a professional writer like you. Professional, because you probably spend a fifth of your working day writing — and even more time reading what other civil servants write.

The written word is your main currency. Stop reading now if yours is in mint condition. But read on if you think a word on plain English could add extra value to your skills.

There's a lot of it about

Official writing is full of verbiage — dead material clogging up the thoughts of its reluctant readers. The Civil Service is probably no worse in this respect than businesses and local authorities. Consider this example from an Automobile Association letter to a member:

> The relevant comments which you have made in respect of the case under review, have been carefully considered. Immediately we would concur that from a point of conjecture, or in a hypothetical sense, it may indeed be of benefit, or meritorious to your position, if details could be extracted from the book within the repairer's premises, to which you have referred, and which may contain details of your instructions or other corroborative matter.
>
> Notwithstanding the foregoing, practically, we would require to address ourselves as to how such information may be obtained, or extracted. Basically, even if such record in the case of such a book, should still exist within the premises of the motor traders, it may, quite frankly, be found that they would be extremely reticent to make such information, or data immediately available to you, or at worst, admit that it exists at all.
>
> Therefore, whilst as aforesaid, there may be hypothetical merit in what you have stated, to all practical purposes it may be difficult, if not impossible to procure such data or evidence again pre-supposing that it actually exists.

Now maybe you've never written anything quite like that. But how often have you looked at an incoming minute and thought, 'What exactly does this mean?' or 'Why doesn't he get to the point?' Are you sure that someone, somewhere, isn't saying the same about something you've written? Writers sometimes think they know how to say what they mean and can't understand why other people don't see what they mean.

If you see what we mean . . .

Clarity begins at home

The *Civil Service Pay and Conditions of Service Code* begins:

Under Article 5 of the Civil Service Order in Council 1969, the Minister for the Civil Service is empowered to make regulations for controlling the conduct of Her Majesty's Home Civil Service. Instructions given in the exercise of this power are communicated to departments by the Civil Service Department as part of a consolidated Code. Such instructions stem mainly from two sources, legislation which binds the Crown or which, although not binding the Crown, Ministers have undertaken to apply as though it were so binding; and agreements reached in negotiation with the National Staff Side or with Staff Associations in accordance with custom and practice extending back over more than 50 years. Rules and guidance so issued are mandatory on employing departments. In some instances, the method of application of the rules is precisely defined, in others, the principles to be observed are defined and the method of application is left to departments.

It's not quite in the same league as the AA, but it's difficult to understand without a second or third reading.

Even though a lot of MPO's work isn't seen by the public, our reports, circulars, minutes of meetings and many of our letters are read by staff in other departments. We should practise, as well as preach, plain English. Just because we are writing to other civil servants doesn't mean we should use officialese.

Won't plain words destroy the beauty of English?

No. The examples given already could scarcely be called beautiful. If anything, they're tiring. You have to unravel the language in search of the ideas. One of the strengths of English is its capacity to express complex ideas simply and attractively. You show your mastery of those ideas, and of the language, by doing so.

But I can't say exactly what I mean in plain English

Are you sure? What is more to the point, will your reader understand exactly what you mean if you don't use plain English? The reason for most of your writing is to transmit information or ideas from your mind clearly, convincingly and politely into your reader's mind. Of course, you may have to use technical terms. But when you do, it is even more important to use plain English techniques to explain your ideas clearly. There's no need to sacrifice accuracy in the search for clarity. Follow Einstein — 'I like to make things as simple as possible, but not simpler'.

Won't my letters and reports become longer?

Does it matter if they are longer if they are easier to read and therefore quicker to understand? But you will generally find that plain English is shorter. Bradford Council put its Standing Orders for Contracts into plain English. The old Orders had 3,679 words. The new Orders say the same in plain English in 1,850 words. Moreover, loopholes obscured by jargon in the old Orders were exposed — and closed.

What can be learnt from forms?

Forms and questionnaires can be a test-bed for plain English. Form designers learn a great deal about the way people understand language by examining forms which have been returned and talking to the people who filled them in.

Forty people were asked what they thought was meant by the phrase *disposable income* in a form. They took some time to think about it and among the answers were:

'It means you throw it away'

'It's what you spend on your grocery and rent'

'It means getting rid of . . . you've got to sell your furniture and everything before you can get the grant'

'Is that your earnings coming in?'

Time spent on careful skilful drafting means time saved by the people who have to read and fill in forms. And it means time saved by the staff who have to check and process the information.

Application for Civil Service College Training

Please write clearly and use a separate form for each application.

After completing this page, pass this form to your Line Manager who will need to send it to your Departmental Training Officer for approval. Please allow time for this.

CABINET OFFICE
Management & Personnel Office
CIVIL SERVICE COLLEGE
COL 25

For one day seminars complete this column ONLY.

Course code

Course title

Location *Please tick:*
Belgrave Rd ☐ Sunningdale ☐ Other ☐

Dates

Price

Please tick: Repayment ☐ Non-repayment ☐

Surname (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms)

Forenames

Grade

Department or organisation

Division

Phone number (including GTN if civil servant)

Address to which we should send joining instructions

Postcode

Date of application

For training lasting MORE than one day go on to complete the rest of this page.

Year of joining Civil Service

Date of entry into present grade

Professional qualifications

Academic degrees

Time in your present job

Please describe briefly your present job including the number and grades of staff reporting to you

Please give details of any experience or qualifications that you consider relevant to the course

On the left is a reduced-size version of a redesigned Civil Service College form. Here's a commentary on its language and design.

1 A clear title. In the old-style forms the titles were often missing altogether or subordinate to the departmental name and coat of arms.

2 Clear and polite instructions in large, bold type (even at this reduced size). They replace the impersonal, confusing and even offensive notes which used to say:

> It should be noted that *before* completing page 2 of the form it is necessary to detach page 1 otherwise details entered on page 2 will be duplicated by carbon on to page 1(a). Both sheets must be sent to the College.

The new instructions herald a change in procedure; the expensive and unnecessary carbon system has disappeared.

3 A clear position for this instruction. But could it be misleading? Could you improve it? Is it needed at all?

4 Easy-to-use 'tick-boxes'. They are often simpler than demanding, 'Delete whichever is inapplicable.'

5 Two columns to the page. This layout is often quicker to read and more pleasing to the eye. It gives a more organised structure than one wide column right across the page.

6 A clear instruction. This saves many form-fillers from giving unnecessary details.

7 Adequate space for answers (about 7mm between lines in the full-size form).

Are there any techniques for writing plain English?

Clarity doesn't come naturally to most people — it has to be learnt. Ernest Gowers's classic *The Complete Plain Words* is the bible of techniques for clear writing. Here are some of the important ideas he and others put forward. Bear in mind they are suggestions, not rules.

- The first isn't really a technique at all, more a state of mind. It's attitude. Your writing will become much more conversational and personal if you treat your readers as people and imagine them opposite you in the room. The official who wrote:

In consequence of the non-payment of the above-noted account, an officer of the Board will attend your premises to disconnect your electricity supply facilities

had got his attitude wrong. He wasn't treating his reader as a human being.

- Use short sentences. For writing to civil servants, aim to average 15-25 words. For the public, average 15-20 words. Within these limits you can still be polite and, if you need to be, formal or forceful.

- Use sentences with active verbs. Write:

This report answers your questions

instead of:

Your questions are answered by this report.

The first phrase follows the normal English word order:
subject of the sentence . . . verb . . . object.

This gives your readers much less trouble than:
object . . . verb . . . subject.

- Use verbs instead of nouns created from verbs. For example, use *use* as a verb instead of *the utilisation of*. Reports in particular are full of these grand-sounding noun phrases.

Instead of:

The decision of the department was that employees should work between 9 and 5

write:

The department decided that employees should work between 9 and 5.

- Generally use shorter words instead of their longer equivalents. Try *try* for *attempt, work out* for *calculate,* and *more* for *additional.* There's nothing wrong with long words, though some may be outside your readers' vocabulary. But they are often ingredients of a stodgy style that sends readers to sleep.

- It's often a good idea to address your readers as *you* and refer to yourself or the department as *I* or *we.*

- Use jargon only when it's essential shorthand to people who know what it means. Otherwise explain your technical terms.

- Use a simple style, not a high-sounding, over-educated one. You may know just the right word. Use it by all means — provided you are certain that your readers will understand it.

- Organise your writing in a way that will be helpful to your readers. This may mean, for example, putting the recommendation or decision at the beginning to save your readers skipping to the end to find out what you are leading up to. Remember, readers are invariably in a hurry to get to the point. They want to ride down a motorway, not thrash about in the Hampton Court maze.

Practise the techniques

A straightforward style takes time to develop. At first you may have to spend longer thinking about *how* to say something as well as *what* you are going to say. But eventually it becomes easier to write . . . and easier to read.

Here's part of a water board's letter to a customer. We've left space on the opposite page for you to make it crisper and more vigorous using the techniques of plain English.

Water Resources Act, 1963. Proposed abstraction of water from underground strata at 104, Bridge Road, Woodley.

I refer to your letter dated 31 May 1983 and note that it is proposed to abstract water by means of a well at your property for the purpose of watering your garden.

No licence is required under the above Act where water is abstracted from underground strata for the domestic purposes of the abstractor's own household. It is considered that an abstraction of water from underground strata for the purpose of watering a private garden attached to a dwellinghouse is excepted from the licensing requirements of the above Act as a domestic purpose.

As regards the second paragraph of your letter, the Authority have not imposed restrictions upon pumping water by means of wells for garden watering by sprinklers. However, should there be exceptional drought conditions it would, of course, be essential for the greatest economies in the use of water to be exercised, particularly for such a purpose, so as to avoid wastage.

There's more

Most departmental libraries have some books on plain English. Amongst those in the Cabinet Office library are:

- *The Complete Plain Words,* E Gowers
- *Guidelines for Document Designers,* D B Felker & others
- *Guidelines for Forms Design,* Cabinet Office (MPO)
- *Usage and Abusage,* E Partridge
- *Modern English Usage,* H W Fowler
- *Writing Plain English,* M Cutts & C Maher
- *Daily Mirror Style,* K Waterhouse

The last word

The last word

From Lord Gowrie

Most Ministers have too much to read and I am no exception. But I admit that I have enjoyed this booklet. It is clear and to the point. I look to all who work in the Cabinet Office (MPO) to read, digest, and apply its lessons.

The message is simple. Using plain English is the best way to write. The audience will pay more attention to what you have to say if you can capture their interest and if they don't have to waste time unravelling the language.

The first step is also simple. Put yourself in the position of your readers. Then you will see why your letters, minutes or reports will be more acceptable and more convincing if they are written in plain English.

As a lecturer in English literature I used to set my new students an early exercise to describe a bicycle to a visitor from Mars. They soon found that writing plain English wasn't so easy.

Of course this booklet isn't comprehensive. But if you keep it close to hand and use the tips on pages 8 and 9, they will help. The library has more advanced material when you want it.

Make plain English the MPO style.

Gowrie

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cc: DES
MAFF
LOD
CWO, H/L
CWO, H/L
LAD
Lord Gowrie's Office
DTI
HO

Efficiency Unit
LCO
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FCO
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LPO
D/Trans.

CO
CDLO
D/Emp
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LPSU
CSO,
HMT
DHSS

FLE

84

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

29 May, 1984

Review of Administrative Forms: Second Progress Report

The Prime Minister has asked me to send you the enclosed copy of a report by the Cabinet Office (MPO) on progress made in the second year of the follow-up to the review of administrative forms.

Clearer forms give a better service to the public, and help to improve efficiency in departments. Over the next 12 months priority will be given to the simplification of legal language, an area which the Prime Minister agrees needs special consideration.

The Prime Minister hopes that Ministers will continue to take a personal interest in the improvement of forms in their departments, and ensure that the momentum of the review is sustained. She has asked Lord Gowrie to commission a further report from the Central Forms Unit (MPO) in April 1985 to show the extent to which standards of forms design and forms control, which will provide a guarantee for the further of progressively better forms, have been taken up across departments.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries of Ministers in charge of departments, Mary Brown (Lord Gowrie's Office), Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office) and Charlotte Caplan (Efficiency Unit).

David Barclay

The Private Secretary

SAHAAF

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

MISS PHIPPARD

OFFICE OF THE MINISTER OF STATE, PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

The Prime Minister considered over the weekend Lord Gowrie's minute of 21 May, to which was attached a second progress report on the review of administrative forms.

The Prime Minister has agreed to endorse the report, and I shall be writing accordingly to the offices of Ministers in charge of Departments. The covering letter will incorporate some amendments to the draft which was attached to Lord Gowrie's minute. These have been approved by the Prime Minister.

MR. D. BARCLAY

29 May 1984

Prime Minister (4)

Agree attached letter to Departments?

DMB 23/5

PRIME MINISTER

Yes

... I attach the second progress report on the review of administrative forms. This was called for in last year's progress report which you endorsed.

This is a good story. We have now kept the spotlight on forms for 2 years and public interest remains high. The short covering report shows what is being achieved as a result. The Annex is rather bulky but it is worth dipping into, because the "before and after" examples (see paragraphs 8-11) bring home how forms can be much more acceptable and easier for the public to fill in.

The report has 2 main points:

- the momentum of the review has increased. 40% of the nationally used forms have now been looked at since the review started. A quarter of them have been redesigned and 20%* have been abolished, although in most cases these have been simplified and consolidated rather than cut out altogether. Plans have been prepared which will keep up the momentum in 1984-85.

* ie 20% of 40%, or 8% of the total.

DMB 23/5

- standards have been set. We cannot keep forms in the limelight indefinitely. Standards for designing good forms have therefore been drawn up with departments by the Central Forms Unit in the Cabinet Office (MPO) with professional advice from outside the service. More importantly, a model framework has been provided for departments to keep control over their forms in future.

During the coming year, the Central Forms Unit will be auditing the introduction of these standards throughout the service. When this shows that departments are applying the standards satisfactorily, we can be confident that the forms review has taken root in departments.

Conclusions

I recommend that you endorse the report and send it to Ministers
... in charge of departments. I attach a draft private secretary letter for this purpose. There continues to be much interest in our work on improving Government forms and if you endorse the report I will arrange for it to be sent to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and to be published.

I also recommend that you call for a further report next April. This will show the extent to which the forms review has taken root in departments, providing a guarantee for the future of progressively better forms. And it will also pick up progress with the simplification of legal language in forms which is being given priority during the year.

LORD GOWRIE

21 May 1984

forms reform

Second progress report to the Prime Minister by the Cabinet Office

(Management and Personnel Office) April 1984

CONTENTS

(Cover designed by students from the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication, Reading University)

ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS IN GOVERNMENT

SECOND PROGRESS REPORT TO THE PRIME MINISTER BY THE CABINET OFFICE (MPO)

1. The Government announced in February 1982 that it was to undertake a continuous and sustained programme of action to reduce the number of forms wherever possible and to simplify those that are essential.*

2. This report is about what has been achieved in the past year and what it is planned to do in the coming year. It is based on statements by 23 departments which between them cover nearly all forms used by Government.

SUMMARY

3. The main points are:

(1) The pace has hotted up. In the first year departments reviewed 14,000 forms. Last year the number was 34,000. Next year it is planned to be 31,000. By April 1985 two out of every three Government forms will have been covered.

(2) During the past 12 months important forms such as the vehicle licence application form and the application form for the Young Workers Scheme have been made easier for the citizen and more efficient for the department concerned.

(3) In the first year one in four of the forms looked at was scrapped. Last year departments scrapped one in six and overall, since the policy was announced, 9,400 types of form have been abolished.

(4) Procedures have been set up within all departments to control their forms. 104,000 different types of form have now been identified. 12,400 of these have been significantly improved (9,700 last year alone). 26,900 have been given a clean bill of health. That leaves 65,000 forms still to be looked at.

(5) Savings to departments which have been identified in the second year of review are estimated to be worth £2.9 million a year.

(6) The Government now has Service-wide standards promulgated by the Central Forms Unit of the Cabinet Office (MPO) for keeping forms under control and better designed. Through these standards the basis has been laid for a lasting effort and continuing improvement.

(7) These activities cost £1 million in the first year when the forms units were being set up and £1.8 million in the second. However, the review only accounts for half of this. It would cost about £0.9 million to draw up forms to the standard which prevailed before the White Paper. The budget will stay at about the same level for 1984-85.

4. But the statistics can only tell a small part of the story. Just a glance at some of the newly revised forms can say more about progress than words and figures. We therefore asked departments to provide examples to illustrate the changes. These "before and after" pictures show that many of the new forms are an entirely different product from the pieces of paper they have replaced.

*Administrative Forms in Government (Cmnd 8504)

ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE SECOND YEAR

5. Forms units in departments set out to review 30,000 forms in the year. What they achieved is set out below:

Table A **Summary: 1983-4**	**All forms**				**Important forms**			
	Review Completed	Abolished	Design Retained	New Design	**Review Completed**	Abolished	Design Retained	New Design
Public	**8,726**	1,543	3,955	3,228	**496**	113	89	294
Business and Industry	**5,300**	864	2,950	1,486	**297**	28	112	157
Internal to department	**20,452**	3,424	12,047	4,981	**174**	18	70	86
TOTAL	**34,478**	5,831	18,952	9,695	**967**	159	271	537

A breakdown of these figures by department is given at Appendix B.

6. Forms abolished included 4 different forms used by the Office of Fair Trading for registering restrictive trade practices which have been replaced by a single form and 33 different certificates used by the MSC skill centres which have been replaced by a single certificate. That means simpler administration but there are also other benefits to the taxpayer. For example, when the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food combed out their stationery store to get rid of redundant forms, they filled two ten-ton lorries with documents and saved at least 1,000 sq ft of storage space worth £7,000 a year.

7. In the Government category for the 1983 Plain English Awards, there were 35 forms entries of which 3 took awards. The Home Office won an award for the application forms for Naturalisation as a British Citizen. DHSS and Inland Revenue also won awards for the recently introduced Supplementary Benefit Postal Claim Form and the newly designed Income Tax Return respectively.

Better service and lower costs

8. Examples of better service to the citizen and reduced costs include:

- All applicants for civil legal aid used to have to go to a DHSS local office for interview. The department introduced a postal form in 1983, written in plain English and designed to be easy to complete (even though it was 12 pages long). The direct cost was £25,000 to develop. The immediate result is that it will save 130 posts, worth £1½ million a year; and it will give a better service to the public because people will be able to fill in the form at home rather than have to journey to a DHSS local office.

- Fifty thousand passengers arriving at UK airports each year have to complete a special customs declaration because their baggage has been misrouted and has not arrived with them. Over half these declarations were completed incorrectly, causing added irritation to the passengers and taking up the time of airline and customs staff. A new form cost £2,500 to research and design and tests have shown that the proportion of wrongly completed forms has now been cut to 3%. This will save HM Customs and Excise £33,000 a year in time spent processing the form in addition to the time saved by the passengers and airline staff.

- The Land Registry has to deal with complaints from the public because one of its forms has to guard against unscrupulous debtors selling their houses. Many people found the form concerned offensive because it seemed, at a first glance, to be suggesting that they were facing bankruptcy. A new form cost £600 in staff time to design and has drastically reduced the number of complaints, saving the Registry £2,600 a year.

9. Good design is also an important feature for forms which go to businesses. For example, the forms backing up the Queen's Award for Technological Achievement and the Queen's Award for Industry were hard to follow. New forms have been produced by the Department of Trade and Industry to be attractive and to save staff time in dealing with wrong information.

10. Firms send 150,000 applications to the Department of Employment each year under the Young Workers Scheme. Only half the applications were completed correctly and the Department had to follow up the errors and omissions with the employers before payment could be made. It cost £350 to design a new form. This was put into use for 6 months. From the lessons learned a final design incorporating further improvements was made. The Department expects that at least three-quarters of the forms will now be filled in correctly, which will save time to the employer and save the Department over £11,000 a year in administrative costs.

11. Departments have rightly given priority to forms which go to the public. Two thirds of the nationally used forms are, however, designed for internal administration. The Ministry of Defence have selected their 12 staff expenses claim forms for a major review this year. These forms have to build in safeguards against fraud, which make them difficult to handle and time consuming to process. They abolished 3 of the forms and the review will save the Ministry 80,000 hours in staff time - worth £400,000 a year - both because the staff find the new forms easier and quicker to complete and because the number of wrongly completed forms has been cut by half.

HOW THIS HAS BEEN DONE

12. One theme runs through the examples: good forms give a better service to the public and the time which has to be spent on their design can often be quickly recovered through greater efficiency in the department.

13. The approach which is being adopted most widely by departments is to concentrate on important forms for thorough examination and to set up regular checks on other forms to make sure that they are still necessary and to make straightforward improvements.

14. Co-operation has been one of the keynotes of success. For example, although the Office of Fair Trading is too small to have a forms unit they have brought together the senior administrators, lawyers and information officers to design a simplified form which meets the essential legal requirements. Their new form has been welcomed by the CBI, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, the Law Society, and the Bar Council and 6 leading London solicitors involved in this area of work.

15. Several examples show the value of advice from experts outside Government:

- The new vehicle licence application form shows how DVLC worked with the students from the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication at Reading University. Nine million of these forms will be

used every year and a reduction of at least 2% in the handling time at the Post Office counter should lead to savings in excess of £100,000 a year.

- The Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys, with the assistance of the Plain English Campaign, designed a new form for re-registering a birth. In addition to saving time dealing with the 30% of forms which used to be filled in wrongly, the Office expects more forms to be used in future because people will no longer be put off by the appearance.

16. The Central Forms Unit in the Cabinet Office (MPO) codifies and spreads best practice between departments. Examples of the most important circulars issued in the last year are:

- an introduction to forms testing (shown at Appendix D);
- computer forms: a study into the design of forms which provide information or use information which is computerised;
- the Financial Management Initiative and forms reviews;
- composing systems: with special reference to computerised forms design;
- statutory forms: advice agreed with the First Parliamentary Counsel about forms which are defined in legislation.

The support which the Civil Service College, the Forms Information Centre and the Plain English Campaign have given to the review is described in Appendix A.

WHAT NEXT?

17. Forms are never entirely right and improvements take place in stages. Even where a forms has been revised recently and has saved resources it may still be possible to go for further improvements - particularly simplification of legal language. For instance the Department of Transport have revised a form about the Pedestrianisation of Highways. The new form is cheaper to produce and easier to complete, and it will be tested among local authorities who complete it. The next stage in improving the form will be to look at the wording. Simplification of legal language will be a priority area for all departments during the next 12 months.

18. A count of the proportion of forms reviewed over the past two years in different departments (Appendix C) ranges from 1 in 10 in the Treasury to 2 out of 3 in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Of course this count cannot allow for the time which departments spend on designing particular forms, nor for the problems they meet and the standards they aim for. At one extreme, it took the DHSS forms unit 2 man years to develop the civil legal aid claim form. At the other, several departments have shown that considerable progress is possible with limited resources.

19. For the coming year departmental forms units plan to review 31,000 forms. Of these something over 1,000 will merit special attention because they are used in large numbers or because they deal with particularly important subjects. For example, the Ministry of Defence and the Property Services Agency will be looking at their contract documents. The Lord Chancellor's Department will look at probate forms. The Department of Transport will look at the driving licence application form and at the driving test form. Customs and Excise will be looking again at VAT forms. DHSS will be looking at retirement pension forms.

20. During the year the Cabinet Office (MPO) Central Forms Unit will monitor the aplication of Service-wide standards for forms control and forms design in departments. These standards have been set out in two Management Guidelines shown in Appendix E. We recommend that the unit should submit a further report to the Prime Minister and the Minister of State, Privy Council Office, in April 1985 showing how departments are measuring up to these standards.

D W Overington
A T Flindell
A D Redwin

Cabinet Office (Management and Personnel Office)
April 1984

Appendix A

CABINET OFFICE (MPO) SUPPORT FOR THE FORMS REVIEW - 1983-84

1. Support for the forms review in departments has been provided by the Cabinet Office (MPO) through the Civil Service College and, under arrangements made by the Central Forms Unit, through the Forms Information Centre at Reading University and the Plain English Campaign.

CIVIL SERVICE COLLEGE

2. Increasing interest in departments has been reflected in the attendance at courses run at the College. This has increased from 54 course members in 1980-81 to 450 in 1982-83 and to 625 in 1983-84. The number of different courses has increased from 18 in 1982-83 to 48 in 1983-84, reflecting the College policy of running seminars to focus attention on particular topics. An example was the seminar on legal language in forms which was led by Mr Halmer Hudson, Honorary Secretary of the Statute Law Society and Mr John Walton, a local government solicitor and organiser of Clarity (a movement for the simplification of legal English).

3. The College is undertaking research into the effect which bad forms have on administrative costs to provide new material for the seminars. Drawing upon experience in the USA, guidance has been developed to help departments identify, predict and measure the cost associated with poor design.

4. The College has two lecturers who run courses on forms design and control and also calls upon training consultants, particularly the Harry Mitchell Ltd College. The basic forms design course has been well attended. It has been extensively recast to take account of the lessons from the forms review. In addition, the College lecturers have run sessions on forms for 28 other courses at the College and 4 courses run by other departments.

5. The College has kept in close touch with forms units in order to tailor the new seminars to their needs and has established contacts with major companies involved in the manufacture and processing of forms.

6. The College will continue to develop new seminars in 1984-85 to meet the expanding needs of forms units. These will include seminars on measuring the cost-effectiveness of forms in use and seminars for the exchange of ideas and experience on legal and contractual aspects of forms.

FORMS INFORMATION CENTRE

7. The Forms Information Centre was set up in October 1982 at Reading University Department of Typography & Graphic Communication. The aims of the Centre are to provide a central source of published and unpublished material on forms and related topics and to give guidance to departments on the principles of forms design and control. The Centre now holds a wide range of publications and journals and a collection of forms from Government and the private sector. The Centre handles up to 20 enquiries a month from departments, many requiring research.

8. During the year the Centre organised a seminar bringing together scholars interested in forms design and representatives of departmental forms units. They also held an open day at the Centre with talks and discussions.

9. The Centre has published 3 study papers:

- Colour in Forms: a brief guide (July 1983);
- Forms Design: a guide to reading (September 1983); and
- Forms Design: a guide to equipment and materials (January 1984).

10. Plans for 1984-85 include the publication of further study papers and the introduction of a new series of topic sheets dealing with particular subjects in which there has been general interest from departments. Topic sheets on the following will be issued shortly:

- Typographic aspects of word processing;
- Response areas;
- Address boxes; and
- Legibility of text.

11. The Centre will be extending its contacts with other organisations in the public and private sectors during 1984-85 to provide a broader base for study and greater exchange of ideas and experience. The work of the Centre will be reinforced from October 1984 by the appointment to the Department of Typography & Graphic Communications of a Research Fellow in Public Information and Design (funded by the University).

PLAIN ENGLISH CAMPAIGN

12. The Plain English Campaign (PEC) have been engaged as consultants to the MPO to help forward the work in departments during the review.

13. Three schemes have been set up through the Central Forms Unit for PEC to help departments.

Forms appraisal	-	PEC give constructive advice on the design and language of forms before they are reviewed and after the departmental forms unit has prepared a draft design.
Forms testing	-	PEC give practical help to forms units the first time they test a form with members of the public, following the procedures set out in the FUN circular on forms testing shown at Appendix D.
Forms Workshops	-	PEC hold short practical training sessions in departments with forms sponsors and the forms units.

14. In addition, PEC have advised the Central Forms Unit on the forms control and design guidelines and on the advice given about forms testing. They have worked with the Central Forms Unit to produce a short departmental booklet to set out the case for plain English and to demonstrate the support by Ministers and senior management in the department. A booklet has been introduced as a pilot in MPO, with a postscript from the Minister of State (Privy Council Office). A copy is shown as Appendix F.

Achievements in the second year

Table A **Summary: 1983-4**	All forms **Review Completed**	Abolished	Design Retained	New Design	Important forms **Review Completed**	Abolished	Design Retained	New Design
Public	**8,726**	1,543	3,955	3,228	**496**	113	89	294
Business and Industry	**5,300**	864	2,950	1,486	**297**	28	112	157
Internal to department	**20,452**	3,424	12,047	4,981	**174**	18	70	86
TOTAL	**34,478**	5,831	18,952	9,695	**967**	159	271	537
Breakdown by department								
MAFF	**690**	260	295	135	**34**	-	24	10
C&E	**785**	280	168	337	**45**	5	7	33
MOD	**1,620**	125	525	970	**1**	-	-	1
DVLC	**2,371**	525	1,220	626	**21**	-	16	5
DES	**429**	135	240	54	**22**	1	16	5
DEmp	**414**	107	79	228	**46**	3	6	37
DOE	**334**	37	194	103	**16**	5	-	11
OFT	**65**	7	41	17	**14**	3	7	4
FCO	**871**	182	616	73	**3**	-	-	3
DHSS	**6,100**	380	4,700	1,020	**55**	2	-	53
HO	**2,821**	763	1,260	798	**-**	-	-	-
IR	**3,650**	438	1,886	1,326	**107**	12	3	92
LR	**456**	49	349	58	**26**	-	17	9
LCD	**521**	4	326	191	**37**	-	-	37
MPO	**948**	492	49	407	**75**	22	-	53
MSC	**1,232**	279	267	686	**16**	4	-	12
DNS	**2,530**	473	1,118	939	**77**	5	22	50
OPCS	**570**	33	457	80	**14**	-	7	7
PSA	**1,332**	98	677	557	**5**	-	-	5
SO	**688**	150	316	222	**111**	15	58	38
DTI	**2,460**	281	1,984	195	**8**	-	4	4
DTp	**568**	60	442	66	**24**	2	5	17
HMT	**191**	45	68	78	**27**	4	10	13
Other Depts	**2,832**	628	1,675	529	**183**	76	69	38
TOTAL	**34,478**	5,831	18,952	9695	**967**	159	271	537

Progress and plans

Table B	All Forms at March 84			Important Forms at March 84		
	Total for Dept	Reviewed in 82-3 & 83-4	Planned for Review in 84-5	Total for Dept	Reviewed in 82-3 & 83-4	Planned for Review in 84-5
Public	20,381	9,159	8,050	1,196	543	501
Business & Industry	17,476	8,260	4,189	983	360	418
Internal to Dept	66,126	22,629	18,737	616	164	203
TOTAL	103,983	40,048	30,976	2,795	1,067	1,122

Breakdown by department

MAFF	3,790	2,518	424	75	40	35
C&E	1,853	581	710	97	44	33
MOD	9,800	3,220	2,080	234	1	41
DVLC	3,558	2,267	1,243	55	34	21
DES	978	502	250	25	23	2
DEmp	2,288	353	410	153	54	99
DOE	588	366	157	38	17	21
OFT	584	171	51	32	14	6
FCO	1,844	944	900	30	29	1
DHSS	13,714	5,720	5,200	200	67	81
HO	6,371	2,277	3,506	61	8	53
IR	8,480	3,494	4,986	200	134	66
LR	1,133	674	315	76	32	44
LCD	3,250	927	184	230	74	14
MPO	2,072	688	1,000	137	75	62
MSC	2,099	1,015	576	59	33	24
DNS	5,685	2,117	3,568	192	76	116
OPCS	929	570	250	33	14	19
PSA	7,871	2,205	1,000	42	5	26
SO	5,425	784	1,200	235	95	140
DTI	8,355	3,142	914	17	6	7
DTp	1,401	556	550	69	22	27
HMT	1,587	146	370	182	23	70
Other Depts	10,328	4,811	1,132	323	147	114
TOTAL	103,983	40,048	30,976	2,795	1,067	1,122

CABINET OFFICE (MPO) GREAT GEORGE STREET LONDON SW1P 3AL

FORMS UNIT NETWORK

Appendix D

FUN 38

30 November 1983

AN INTRODUCTION TO TESTING

This paper gives general guidance to departments on testing forms, and incorporates the advice and experience of the Central Office of Information, the Forms Information Centre, to Plain English Campaign and HM Stationery Office.

The Cabinet Office (MPO) Central Forms Unit will be revising this guidance in the light of departmental experience with testing forms. It would be helpful if forms units would send the CFU a copy of the internal reports on tests conducted on forms in their departments (see paragraph 26), both for tests undertaken within the department and tests undertaken by outside consultants. These reports would also provide useful material to which departments could refer when planning their own tests and test procedures. The CFU accordingly proposes that a copy of these reports should be held by the Forms Information Centre for reference and research.

Action by Departmental Forms Units

Forms units are invited to:

- develop their own testing procedures, referring to this guidance as necessary
- send to MPO Central Forms Unit a copy of the reports following the test of their forms, and
- agree, wherever possible, that a copy of these reports may be sent to the Forms Information Centre.

DAVID OVERINGTON Management & Efficiency Division 01-233 4077/4062

AN INTRODUCTION TO TESTING

What is meant by "Testing a Form"

1. Testing a form usually means finding out from people who use the form (or other people who can look at the form from the users point of view) whether they can understand it and find it easy to complete and handle. This is known as diagnostic testing, because its purpose is to help the designer find out if there is anything wrong with the form and where it might be improved. This paper is concerned only with diagnostic testing. Different types of testing which can be undertaken for other reasons are briefly described in Annex A.

2. Testing a form can be a complex task, calling for considerable skill, time and money. But it can be as simple as passing a copy of the form to a colleague for a second opinion.

3. This paper gives general guidance which is appropriate for testing the more important forms other than those which call for professional skills. It can be modified for forms which are rather less important. A forms appraisal (see FUN 19) or a much simpler method of testing will be more appropriate for testing straightforward low circulation forms.

Who is responsible for testing a form

4. The forms unit will normally take the lead in setting up and running the test, as the experience which the unit gains from testing one form can be applied when designing and conducting tests on other forms.

5. The policy or operational division, however, carries the final responsibility for the effectiveness and efficiency of a form when it is in use, and they should be closely involved in the way the test is designed and run.

Why is it necessary to test a form

6. Three reasons:

- the person who draws up the form is not a good judge of his own product

7. Neither the staff in the policy or operational division, nor the forms designer can look at a form from the same standpoint as the person who has to complete it. Because they will be very familiar with the form, they will find it hard to be objective and critical. They will be used to handling forms; they will be accustomed to Civil Service and departmental jargon - as well as the subject matter of the form. The reader may not be. They may well have a wider vocabulary than the reader. They will certainly know the reason for the form, and for each question and statement. The reader may not.

- the designer needs to know if the form is an efficient means of communication

8. A form may go to hundreds or thousands of people. For this reason alone it is worthwhile checking that the people who receive it do find it easy to understand and use.

- the author and designer needs to know if the form is an effective means of communication

9. The person responsible for a policy or procedure may go to considerable trouble to make sure that the policy is fair, and will achieve its intended purpose. But it will not be fair, nor effective, if some people do not understand it. People who use a form may not react as the designer expected that they would. Some may not understand it or may misunderstand it; others may find it intimidating, discourteous, complicated or difficult to complete for reasons of which the designer was unaware.

10. An efficient and effective form is one which will achieve the purpose for which it is used at least cost to the department and the recipient. Testing can pay for itself by providing the designer with useful feedback to help him improve the effectiveness of the form.

Do forms need to be tested if they have a low "error rate"

11. It is a valuable exercise to look at completed forms and measure the "errors". This will provide useful supporting information, but it will not show whether the user had difficulty in filling in the form; it may not show whether the user understood it correctly, and it will give no indication as to whether the user found it acceptable - or whether he had inadvertently been put off from returning it!

When should the test be conducted

12. An existing form may be tested to see whether it needs redesigning, and if so, what aspects are causing problems. It is, however, sensible to remedy any obvious weaknesses in an existing form before testing it to find out whether any further changes are desirable.

13. Certain aspects of a form can sometimes be tested before the whole form is tested.

14. A new form should be tested before it is introduced. Often, however, there is insufficient time for this to be done, and a form can be tested very effectively with people who are using it after it has been introduced. Changes can then be made before it has to be reprinted.

15. Testing is not intended simply to confirm the design of a form. It is part of the design process, a "consultation with the user". Sufficient time should always be allowed for changes to be made in the design to reflect the feedback from the test.

What aspects can be tested

16. A good form is a form which is an effective and efficient means of communication.

- to be effective it must be acceptable and easy to understand

- to be efficient it must be easy to complete and process.

17. The forms designer should look critically at 4 aspects of the form:

- Is the form acceptable? Is the 'first reaction' favourable? Is the need for it apparent? Is it clear who sent it, what it is about, and where to go for advice? Or does it look unattractive or complicated?

- Is the form easy to understand? Is it understood correctly? Is it clear exactly what information is needed? Do the questions flow logically? Does the design make it easy to follow? Or is the language unnecessarily difficult? Does it contain jargon or unexplained abbreviations? Are the sentences complicated? Is any part of the form ambiguous?

- Is the form easy to complete? Is it easy to see which parts to fill in and which to skip? Is there enough space to provide the information? Is it easy to relate the question to the answer space? Is the information needed for quick reference positioned in an obvious place?

- Is the form easy to process? Is it easy to handle. Is it compatible with office systems? Can it be completed by typewriter? Can it be copied easily? Is it clear where to send it? Can it be processed quickly? (The form may need to be tested separately with the people who issue it and who handle it when it has been returned.)

18. The aim of the test should be to provide the designer with evidence to help him answer these questions, and to make improvements to the form.

Who should the form be tested on

19. Ideally, the feedback should come from people who will use the form. This may not always be possible, and useful feedback can be obtained by testing the form with the following:

- Users of the form

- People who are similar to users (The convenience of setting up regular "user panels" may outweigh the risk of user panels becoming too familiar with forms)

- Other members of the public (for public forms)

- Staff from other Government departments

- Staff in the department who are not familiar with the subject

- Other staff in the division responsible for the form.

20. Wherever possible, public forms should be tested with members of the public. Civil servants are used to forms and jargon. (Comments on an internal form from someone who is not a civil servant may sometimes be illuminating.)

21. Some people with no knowledge of the subject should be included in the test group. Even if the form generally goes to people who are conversant with its use, there will always be newcomers. And the worst forms can become tolerable with practice.

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22. Professional and representative bodies are often consulted about a form. Their advice can be helpful, but this is not a substitute for testing directly with the kind of people who have to work with the form.

23. It is not necessary to involve large numbers of people. The test is not designed to forecast with precision what the likely error rate will be. (See Annex A: predictive testing). For all but the most important forms (where professional advice should be taken) useful feedback can be obtained from small groups of 10-20 people.

24. Discussion may be stimulated if a form is considered by groups of three to four people under the guidance of a group leader.

How should the test be conducted

25. A test should be straightforward, but it needs to be planned. It should not be over-ambitious. (A form should be tested professionally if it is sufficiently important to merit a complex and rigorous test.)

26. The following notes set out the main preliminary stages:

- set out a statement of objectives. These should be related to the 4 aspects given in paragraph 17 above. The statement of objectives may consist of a list of very specific questions to which the test will be designed to give clear answers which will help the form designer.

- decide on the test group. Set out the number and kind of people with whom the form will be tested. It is customary to offer payment.

- set out the method of obtaining the answers. Consider the relative merits of alternative methods such as a questionnaire; asking people to complete the form; asking people to underline parts of the form which they think ought to be made clearer; group discussions; discussion with individuals; observation; consider introducing 2 forms for comparison. A designer may find it useful to test 2 forms which are identical apart from 1 feature to show which is more effective.

- select the interviewers. Members of the test group may be reluctant to be seen to be unable to understand the form. Take care to select interviewers or group leaders who will be observant, sympathetic and encouraging. A good interviewer will be a good listener - and will never intrude with his or her own views, or "lead" the individual or group towards any particular conclusion or reaction. Decide whether to give respondents the form (and perhaps a questionnaire) to fill in at home a few days before the interview. This is particularly appropriate where a form is long or where the respondent needs to look up information at home (eg reference numbers etc). It is especially difficult to simulate the form-filling task for such forms in an on-the-spot test.

- set out the possible answers. Look objectively at each question and consider carefully what kind of answers might be given. Make sure that these answers will help the form designer to improve the form.

- decide on the venue. Some tests are best conducted in 'live' situations. This is often difficult to arrange, and it is more likely to be practicable when the form is being tested in use (see Annex A). It may, however, be more constructive and more conducive to an easy flow of ideas, if the test is arranged at an office or meeting room (eg a club) where there is more time and better facilities.

- draw up a test plan. Some suggested question areas and an outline of a group discussion programme are given at Annex B. Decide on the time for each stage. Review the test as a whole to make sure that it is not overambitious.

- prepare the material. Designing questionnaires needs great care: consider points such as 'open' questions or suggested answers with tick boxes. Remember to include 'other', 'don't know', or 'don't feel strongly either way', when appropriate. Questionnaires should be pilot tested before they are used.

  (Literature on questionnaire design is available from the Forms Information Centre)

- Draw up interviewers notes and group leaders notes. These should be designed to structure discussion and record observations. Remind interviewers that people may give a wrong answer to a question to conceal embarrassment. Open questions handled sympathetically such as: "When it says 'gross pay' what do you think it means?" are more likely to bring an accurate response than a closed question (inviting a yes or no answer) such as "Do you understand what is meant by 'gross pay'?"

After the test

26. Particular care is needed when reporting the results of the test. Ideally the person in charge should draft a report immediately following the test, while the interviewers are still present. The report should cover the following points:

- a brief description of the test, covering the number and type of people taking part (eg unemployed, old age pensioners), the way the test was conducted and the venue.

- a factual summary from the completed forms, questionnaires and group leaders notes.

- provisional conclusions related to each of the test objectives.

- qualifications to the conclusions, for example where an interviewer or group leader might have influenced the test result through asking "leading questions", or by giving an indication of a personal view; poor lighting when the form was being completed.

- other information which came out of the test which should be drawn to the attention of the designer.

- points on the design or conduct of the test which might be useful to the forms unit when testing other forms in future.

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METHODS OF TESTING

Diagnostic Testing

1. The purpose of a diagnostic test is to find out whether a form or part of a form is easy for the reader to understand, and whether the reader will readily take the action which the person sending out the form intends. It is primarily a part of the design process. It provides an opportunity for the designer to work with the users by taking note of their reactions and suggestions on how the form could be improved so that it will be easier to understand or use.

2. Expertise in forms testing is essential when dealing with the most important, complex or high circulation forms. Very many forms can, however, be tested with small groups in a straightforward way. Such tests can yield useful ideas for the designer, and can confirm or otherwise any unusual features which the designer may have introduced.

Predictive Testing

3. The purpose of the predictive test is to forecast with reasonable accuracy how the form will be used once it is introduced. Some of the most thorough diagnostic tests may be used to predict error rates; but any predictive test will call for skilled sampling and testing techniques and a large sample of appropriately controlled subjects.

System Testing

4. System testing is concerned more with the procedures than with the form itself - although the intelligibility of any instructions will be an important feature of the test. System testing may cover, for example, handling arrangements, methods of delivery and the facilities for stocking and issuing the form; the time between issue and receipt of the form; and any training needed for the staff.

Pilot Testing (Piloting)

5. A pilot test is a test conducted under "live" conditions, where a form is introduced into use in a restricted area - for example, a single office or district. It usually serves as both a system test and a predictive test; arrangements may also be included for diagnostic testing.

Testing in use (Monitoring)

6. This is similar to pilot testing, except that the form is introduced into general use and its performance closely monitored for a specific period.

7. Such a test must, however, include arrangements for the users to be consulted to find out whether they are finding the form acceptable or difficult in any way (even if they supply the correct information). It may not be possible to be sure that the information given is correct (for example, gross pay may be given if the person completing the form did not understand the term "net pay"). It will also be necessary to find out if the form is understood - especially if it does not have to be returned (for example, an application for a driving licence in contrast to an income tax form). Error rates alone can be misleading.

SOME SUGGESTED QUESTION AREAS AND METHODS

Question	Possible response	Method
Acceptable?		
What are the readers first reactions to the form? What do the readers think of specific points such as the colour of the form and its title.	Attractive, looks straightforward, looks complicated, scruffy, dull, interesting ... no reaction!	1. Questionnaire listing possible answers. Space for other comments. 2. Discuss in group.
Easy to understand correctly?		
Do the readers find the form easy to understand? Do they think other people will find it easy. If not, what parts are difficult?	Particular words and parts of the form are not easy to understand.	1. Complete the form and mark any parts which could be improved. 2. Discussion in group and individually
Is the organisation and layout of the form in a logical sequence?	Different order would be easier to follow	
What do readers think of specific points, such as the introduction, the clarity of the print, the use of response devices (ie tick boxes) etc.	Helpful or confusing suggestions for improvement.	
Is question (x) understood correctly? If not, what is the problem?	Words are not understood or are misinterpreted.	1. Check completed form 2. Discuss individually
Easy to complete?		
Is there enough space for the answers?	Yes/No for each space.	Check completed forms.
Does the user find it easy to skip questions which he is not intended to answer (Y, Z)?	Yes/No.	Observe: compare the time taken between those people who complete Sections Y, Z of the form and those who do not. Discuss in group.
Easy to process?		
Is it clear where to send the form on completion?	Yes/No.	Ask everyone to write down what they would do with the completed form.

OUTLINE OF GROUP DISCUSSION PROGRAMME

Minutes

15 1. Introduction - explain purpose of test: to get opinions of ordinary folk, the type who will eventually have to fill it in when it comes out; the need for their honest opinions. This will help us find out how to improve it. Must feel free to comment and make suggestions; confidential.

The introduction is important. If you don't set the scene and put respondents at ease, some will be hesitant about criticising the form or be afraid of appearing stupid by admitting they can't understand things. The testing would then produce invalid findings.

5 2. Organise into groups. Issue forms to groups. Ask them to look at it, but not to read through.

25 *3. Discuss immediate reaction. Note comments and suggestions.

15 *4. Ask everyone to complete a form or hand in forms already completed in a placement test. Mark any difficult parts - even if they think they know what it means.

*5. Note time of starting. Observe. Note time of completion for each person or ask how long completion took in placement testing.

*6. Ask everyone to write down what they would do with the completed form, (eg return it to Mr X at Y; attend at Z on Monday).

30. *7. Lead discussion in group on points of possible difficulty. In group discussion points are often explored without asking direct question, eg if the organisation of a form is illogical this fact would emerge but without a direct "is the form illogically ordered?" type of question.

TEA

30 *8. Find out whether specific questions were filled in correctly or not and find out why. This is best done by addressing questions to individuals rather than to the group as a whole. Seek comments.

10 9. Thanks and close.

130

30. 10. Complete notes. Collate questionnaires, completed forms and notes for each group. Discuss with group leaders and prepare report.

160

*action by group leaders

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Administrative forms

GUIDELINES

for managers of forms units

Forms design

These guidelines set out the main points on the way to design a form to ensure that it becomes an effective and efficient means of communication.

There are separate guidelines on forms control.

The *forms design* and *forms control* guidelines apply to –

- forms (in the generally understood sense of documents with blanks to be filled up);
- standard letters; and
- leaflets and other written material which help the reader to understand a form.

Summary

Before designing a form –

responsibility
for the design of the form should be clearly allocated; and

the purpose
of the form should be clearly defined.

When designing a form –

the current performance
of the form should be assessed;

the target performance
should be agreed; and

the performance of the new form
should be tested.

To design a good form –

the language
should be straightforward and direct; and

the layout
should be attractive, clear and logical to the reader.

Action

Managers of forms units are asked –

- to ensure that the arrangements in their departments conform with the guidance given in these guidelines; or
- to satisfy themselves that different practices are fully justified.

The Cabinet Office (MPO) will –

- monitor action by departments; and
- revise this guidance in the light of experience with its application.

Cabinet Office

MPO

Guidelines on administrative forms
are based on the experience gained from studies of forms design and control procedures in a wide range of departments. Departments should liaise with trade unions domestically in the usual way about any local changes. A copy of the guidelines has been sent to the National Audit Office.

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Before designing a form

1 Responsibility
for designing a form should be clearly allocated.

The departmental forms unit
is responsible for–

▶ providing advice and help to the form sponsor on design procedure and on points of language and layout;

▶ consulting and engaging any specialist design services outside the department; and

▶ designing important forms, and preparing the camera-ready copy (or specifying this for preparation externally) for all forms.

The form sponsor
in the policy or operational division is responsible for the effectiveness and efficiency of the form when it is in use. The sponsor is responsible for–

▶ defining the purpose of the form;

▶ specifying the content of the form;

▶ assessing the current performance;

▶ agreeing the target performance with the forms unit for important forms; and

▶ satisfying himself that an acceptable standard has been achieved.

Policy divisions
are expected to see forms as an integral part of the policies which they recommend. They should consider any potential problems for the forms user when recommending policies which involve the use of forms.

2 The purpose
of the form should be clearly defined in order that effectiveness or failure can be assessed.

The form sponsor should specify the content and identify any constraints. The form sponsor should clearly define the following–

▶ target recipients. Recipients who are likely to have greatest difficulty with the form should be separately identified;

▶ intended action by the recipients;

▶ grade and location of staff who issue and process the form; and

▶ intended action by staff.

When designing a form

3 The current performance
of the form should be assessed.

The form sponsor, with help and advice from the forms unit, should assess the current performance of the form.

This should be done for–

Comprehension
The language and design of the form should be examined to see whether the recipient could find it difficult to understand or use. A similar procedure to that set out under guideline 5 for testing a form would generally be appropriate. For important forms, a sample of those filling in the form should be consulted unless the need for a major redesign is apparent.

Staff who issue and process the form should be asked what difficulties they have with it. Their views should also be sought on the nature and extent of any enquiries made to them about the form, and any suggestions they have for improving it.

Errors
A sample of completed forms should be examined to see where errors are arising, and for important forms, the nature and frequency of particular errors. (See Guidelines on Forms Control, guideline 7.)

Cost
The cost of an important form should be examined to see where the significant costs arise. (See Guidelines on Forms Control, guideline 8.)

Forms units should draw the attention of the form's sponsor and other branches of Management Services to any high costs and frequent errors which could be reduced by changes in the way the policy is expressed or the way the procedures have been designed.

4 The target performance
should be agreed.

Targets for an important form should be agreed between the form sponsor and the forms unit. Corresponding procedures should be adopted for other forms where appropriate.

Targets should cover–

Comprehension
The form should be designed for the recipients who find greatest difficulty in understanding and completing it.

An important form should be tested as part of the design process, and the aim should be that at least 90% of the people with whom it is tested should understand it. Less formal ways will be sufficient to check comprehension for other forms.

All staff issuing and processing the form must fully understand it.

Errors
The aim should be that all recipients should complete and return the form correctly, but the 90% standard is more realistic. (See Guidelines on Forms Control, guideline 7.) It may be necessary to accept a lower proportion of correctly completed forms if a large number of the recipients have reading difficulties.

Cost
The cost of the form when target performance has been achieved should be estimated for an important form. (See Guidelines on Forms Control, guideline 8.)

The benefit which the department and the public stand to gain from achieving the target performance should be calculated for an important form. This should be done by comparing–

▶ current cost with target cost; and

▶ current effectiveness with target or forecast effectiveness.

The forms unit should provide an estimate of the cost of the unit's involvement when this is likely to be significant.

5 The performance of the new form
should be tested.

The form sponsor, with help and advice from the forms unit, should test the form to make sure that the targets have been met.

This should be done for–

Comprehension
The forms designer should first check the impression which the form gives by considering objectively–

▶ is it attractive?

▶ does it appear easy to follow and complete?

▶ is it clear what it is about and what the recipient has to do with it?

▶ does it only give or ask for necessary information? (Many forms include inessential material which detracts from the purpose of the form.)

Forms designers are not, however, the best judge of their own creations. The designer should ask someone else (preferably someone who does not deal with the subject, and for forms which go to the public, someone outside the Civil Service) for an honest criticism in response to four questions–

▶ what is your first reaction?

▶ are there any parts which the reader might find it difficult to understand?

▶ are there any areas which the reader might find it difficult to fill in?

▶ will the reader know what to do with the form once it has been completed and where to turn for advice?

The designer or the form sponsor should ask the staff who will issue and process the form for their views.

An important form should be tested more rigorously against the performance target with the help of the forms unit.

Errors
The form sponsor should check for an important form whether the target has been achieved by comparing the error rate with the target after the form has been in use for several months.

The form designer may also wish to look critically at a sample of completed forms to see why errors are still occurring and note where further improvements can be made at the next opportunity.

Cost
The forms sponsor should check once an important form is in use that target savings for the department have been realised and that target improvements in effectiveness have been achieved.

The forms unit should calculate the cost of the design work and compare this with their estimate.

To design a good form

6 **The language** used in forms should be straightforward and direct.

Plain English is not patronising. Even if it is not necessary to use simple language on a particular form (for example, an internal form), forms which are straightforward and well-designed teach by example. The following guidelines are generally accepted as good practice–

▶ use plain English. Avoid acronyms, legal and civil service jargon, and use modern words which the reader will understand;

▶ address the reader personally, preferably as *you*;

▶ use verbs instead of nouns created from verbs. For example, *rely* instead of *reliance, use* instead of *utilization;*

▶ use the active or imperative form of the verb.

active: *This leaflet answers your questions.*

—not: *Your questions are answered by this leaflet.*

imperative: *Please return this form by 15 October*

—not: *This form should be returned by 15 October;*

▶ use short sentences. 15–20 words on average;

▶ be firm with warnings without being legalistic or intimidating. Emphasise the warning sensibly by using, for example, bold type or a second colour. Link the warning visually with any declaration or signature.

7 **The layout** of the form should be clear, logical and attractive to the reader.

Writing and designing should always be considered together because they influence and complement each other. The following guidelines are generally accepted as good practice:

General principles

▶ do not allow the form to look crowded or cluttered. Space is an essential feature of forms. Use it to help the reader recognise the structure of the information it contains;

▶ use between 35 and 65 characters (6–12 words) to a line when dealing with solid text;

▶ make it obvious where the answer to any question has to be written and allow sufficient space for the reply which the reader wants to give; and

▶ use bold type for emphasis. Avoid strings of continuous capitals; these are difficult to read.

Top and tail

▶ give a form a short explicit title. This should show–

subject: *legal aid; recruitment to the department*

function: *application; certificate of appointment*

addressee: *graduates; taxpayers earning over £10,000 pa* – unless this is self-evident;

▶ show the reference number clearly if it is likely to be used;

▶ show clearly what the reader has to do after completing the form. Highlight any deadlines;

▶ keep declarations and undertakings short and simple, and not intimidating; and

▶ give an office or section (and, where appropriate, a name) and the address and telephone number for enquiries.

Organisation of text

▶ use a sequence that will seem logical to the reader. This helps the reader complete the form;

▶ make any instructions on how to complete the form stand out from the text;

▶ keep the number of *official use* areas to a minimum, and separate them in a simple way from the rest of the form;

▶ place guidance notes close to the relevant question. Readers often ignore separate leaflets and notes. But if these are unavoidable, use the same sequence in both and use clear typographic cues to help the reader to refer from one to the other; and

▶ avoid asking the reader to transfer information (for example, code numbers) from one part of the form to another.

Specification for production

▶ use standard paper sizes (A4 or A5), single or folded, wherever possible;

▶ use a type size where the height of a lower-case x is at least 1.5mm (generally 8–10 point);

▶ use a straightforward typeface. Many people consider that a serif typeface (print with tails) is easier to read for continuous text such as leaflets;

▶ use fixed spacing between words (which will give a ragged edge to the right);

▶ allow space between lines of about a quarter of the typesize; and

▶ where a form may be filled in by typewriter, draw any lines to assist completion at multiples of $\frac{1}{6}$ of an inch apart.

Administrative forms

GUIDELINES

for managers of forms units

Forms control

These guidelines set out the main points on the way to control forms to ensure that the forms used by a department are both necessary and well-designed.

There are separate guidelines on forms design.

The *forms control* and the *forms design* guidelines apply to –

- forms (in the generally understood sense of documents with blanks to be filled up);
- standard letters; and
- leaflets and other written material which help the reader to understand a form.

Summary

To support a forms control programme –

responsibility
for forms control should be clearly allocated; and

publicity
should be given to the importance of good forms.

To control forms efficiently –

important forms
should be identified;

a review programme
should be set up and maintained; and

regular reports
should be made to senior management.

To give management information –

central records
should be kept; and

error rates and costs
should be worked out for all important forms.

Action

Managers of forms units are asked –

- to ensure that the arrangements in their departments conform with the guidance given in these guidelines; or
- to satisfy themselves that different practices are fully justified.

The Cabinet Office (MPO) will –

- monitor action by departments; and
- revise this guidance in the light of experience with its application.

Cabinet Office

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To support a forms control programme

1 Responsibility
for the control of forms in the department should be clearly allocated.

The departmental forms unit
is responsible for the overall control of the forms in the department. This includes–

- identifying responsibility for the design and production of forms;
- identifying the sponsor for each form;
- promoting the importance of good forms;
- identifying important forms which merit special attention;
- co-ordinating a programme for forms review;
- reporting to senior management on progress with the review and on the state of the forms which are in use in the department; and

providing advice and help to the form sponsor on–

- costing forms;
- measuring the potential benefits from improved forms and setting performance targets;
- monitoring results and setting performance indicators:

Senior management
is responsible for–

- satisfying themselves that the forms in use are necessary and cost effective;
- emphasising the importance of effective forms; and
- providing the resources and organisation for producing cost-effective forms.

The form sponsors
in the policy and operational divisions are responsible for the quality and the cost of producing and using the forms they sponsor; and in particular for making sure that every form is–

- necessary;
- effective; and
- efficient in use.

Producing good forms calls for co-operation between staff in the forms unit and those in the policy and operational divisions. Many departments have appointed forms liaison officers in policy and operational divisions to work with the forms unit. There should be clearly understood procedures for resolving any differences between the forms unit and the policy or operational branches over the progress which is being made with the review, or the appropriate design or wording of a form, and for drawing the attention of senior management to any legal or procedural requirement which appears to reduce the effectiveness of a form.

2 Publicity
should be given to the importance which the Government attaches to good forms.

Good forms are important for the following reasons–

- forms are widely used. The Civil Service uses over 2,000 million each year;
- forms are the public face of the department;
- forms deal with important subjects. They touch the life and finances of every family, household and business;
- forms directly affect the extent to which a policy works in practice; and
- forms cost a lot to fill in and process. Inefficient procedures and misunderstandings which result from poor forms waste time and money.

The Government's policy
is that there should be a sustained programme of action to reduce the number of forms wherever possible and to simplify those which are essential. (Administrative Forms in Government: Cmnd 8504.)

The forms unit should promote publicity for good forms, for example through–

- staff training;
- office circulars;
- displays of good forms; and
- regular reports to senior management on the standard of forms designed by the department.

The purpose of the publicity
should be to inform staff who have a part to play in creating good forms of the importance which the Government attaches to this, and in particular to show convincingly–

- what is meant by good and bad forms;
- the value of good forms to the department and the public; and
- the nature and extent of personal responsibility.

Publicity should be directed to–

- managers in policy and operational divisions;
- staff who give legal or technical advice;
- form sponsors; and
- staff who use forms as part of their job.

To control forms efficiently

3 Important forms,
which merit special attention, should be identified.

All forms should be well designed but it will take time to achieve this. The forms unit should consider the following points when deciding whether an in-depth review of a form or group of forms is necessary; its priority; and the amount of effort to devote to it–

- the number of forms issued each year;
- the target readership;
- the subject matter;
- the error rate; and
- the cost of the form to produce, issue, complete and process.

New forms
should be approved at a suitable level in the department. The need for every new form should be carefully examined. The forms unit should be involved at an early stage in policy and administrative discussions when the need, content and design of important forms are considered.

4 A programme
should be maintained for reviewing all forms at regular intervals.

The forms unit should co-ordinate a programme covering–

- the regular review of all forms;
- in-depth reviews of important forms, or groups of forms; and
- studies into aspects of forms control covering all forms across the department.

The review programme should provide for the following areas to be examined either when a form comes up for review, or by separate studies covering all forms, or groups of forms. Questions marked ▷ may be better dealt with through separate studies.

Need

▷ Is the form still used? Storage space is expensive.

- Is it necessary (rather then desirable) to give or collect the information?
- Is there a better way of communication?

▷ Can two or more forms be merged to save design effort and simplify printing and storage, without an undue loss of intelligibility?

Design

- Is the form effective and efficient as a means of communication? (See Guidelines on Forms Design.)

▷ Is the review of the form unnecessarily constrained because it is prescribed by legislation?

▷ Is sufficient time allowed for review and redesign?

▷ Would a house style be worthwhile?

Production

▷ Is suitable typesetting equipment used? IBM typesetters produce forms to an acceptable standard. But phototypesetters give higher quality, greater flexibility and better design and storage facilities.

▷ Is the paper and method of printing suitable for the purpose. Important forms may call for special standards.

Use

- Are the forms readily available at the right time to those who issue them?
- Is the use excessive? Do the forms go to the right people?

▷ Does the stock control system make the best use of storage space?

▷ Does the re-order programme work effectively?

5 Reports
should be made to senior management at regular intervals.

Experience in departments has shown that the support of Ministers and senior management is necessary if major improvements are to be achieved.

The forms unit should–

- report progress with the forms review;
- draw attention to particularly good or bad forms and to notable achievements;
- report annually to senior management on the state of the forms in use across the department.

To give management information

6 **Central Records**
should be kept.

Records are needed to plan and conduct the review, eliminate duplicate and redundant forms, control the introduction of new forms and to provide information on progress with the review.

The forms unit should ensure that they have ready access to the following information for all forms–

- number and title;
- purpose;
- target readership;
- number issued and number returned each year;
- method of production;
- size of print order and estimated life;
- date of last reprint;
- any statutory control over design or language;
- date of last review;
- name and post of officer responsible for the form;

and, for all important forms

- date the form was tested;
- error rate (guideline 7) and date of assessment of error rate; and
- cost (guideline 8) and date of costing.

7 **Error rates**
should be worked out for all important forms.

Error rates are needed to decide whether a form should be reviewed, and if so to determine the target performance. The error rate is often the best performance indicator for a revised form.

The forms unit should work out with the form sponsor the error rate for all important forms.

Line managers in operational divisions should draw the attention of the forms unit to any form where action has to be taken to deal with frequent or persistent errors.

There are five kinds of measurable error–

- failure to understand a form, which has led to an enquiry;
- failure to return a form, when a reminder has to be sent out;
- errors in a returned form where the person who has completed it has to be contacted;
- errors which are amended by the office without reference; and
- trivial errors which do not require amendment.

Records on error rates should include the first four types of error. The reasons for all errors should, however, be investigated when redesigning a form.

The aim is error-free forms; but it is more realistic to expect at least 90% of forms to be completed and returned correctly when they are in normal use. The error rate will not however pick up forms which cause difficulty, but which the recipient eventually understands; nor can all errors be detected from returned forms. A 10% error rate may therefore be an overestimate of success.

8 **Costs**
should be worked out for important forms.

Costs are needed to decide how much effort to spend on improving a form; where this effort should be directed; and to measure the result.

The forms unit should work out with the form sponsor the cost of all important forms.

These costs should cover–

- production: paper, printing, storage, distribution to point of use;
- issue: staff and postage costs;
- completion: time and money spent by the recipient assembling information and maintaining records; understanding, completing and returning the form; obtaining advice; and postage.
- processing: staff and other costs involved in checking the form.

Precise costs are not generally required. Approximate figures will highlight any high-cost aspects which can be examined in detail. A small sample survey will usually show the effect of improvements. The costs caused by the error rate should be separately identified.

Time as a cost

The time taken by staff in businesses should be converted to money terms using the appropriate cost to the business, if known, or otherwise an equivalent Civil Service staff cost.

It is usually sufficient to refer to the time taken by the public in hours. This may be estimated from a small sample survey. A member of the public will normally take more time than a civil servant, and may have to search for documents before he can fill in the form.

It may occasionally be useful to convert this to money terms, for example when comparing the benefit to the public with the extra production cost of a revised form. The national average wage may be used when there is no other rate which is more relevant.

Appendix F

The word is...

PLAIN ENGLISH

So far we've asked you to read only five words and look at a coat of arms.

Maybe it took you five seconds. We'd like just another ten minutes of your time to read the rest of this booklet.

That's a small cost to a professional writer like you. Professional, because you probably spend a fifth of your working day writing — and even more time reading what other civil servants write.

The written word is your main currency. Stop reading now if yours is in mint condition. But read on if you think a word on plain English could add extra value to your skills.

There's a lot of it about

Official writing is full of verbiage — dead material clogging up the thoughts of its reluctant readers. The Civil Service is probably no worse in this respect than businesses and local authorities. Consider this example from an Automobile Association letter to a member:

The relevant comments which you have made in respect of the case under review, have been carefully considered. Immediately we would concur that from a point of conjecture, or in a hypothetical sense, it may indeed be of benefit, or meritorious to your position, if details could be extracted from the book within the repairer's premises, to which you have referred, and which may contain details of your instructions or other corroborative matter.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, practically, we would require to address ourselves as to how such information may be obtained, or extracted. Basically, even if such record in the case of such a book, should still exist within the premises of the motor traders, it may, quite frankly, be found that they would be extremely reticent to make such information, or data immediately available to you, or at worst, admit that it exists at all.

Therefore, whilst as aforesaid, there may be hypothetical merit in what you have stated, to all practical purposes it may be difficult, if not impossible to procure such data or evidence again pre-supposing that it actually exists.

Now maybe you've never written anything quite like that. But how often have you looked at an incoming minute and thought, 'What exactly does this mean?' or 'Why doesn't he get to the point?' Are you sure that someone, somewhere, isn't saying the same about something you've written? Writers sometimes think they know how to say what they mean and can't understand why other people don't see what they mean.

If you see what we mean . . .

Clarity begins at home

The *Civil Service Pay and Conditions of Service Code* begins:

Under Article 5 of the Civil Service Order in Council 1969, the Minister for the Civil Service is empowered to make regulations for controlling the conduct of Her Majesty's Home Civil Service. Instructions given in the exercise of this power are communicated to departments by the Civil Service Department as part of a consolidated Code. Such instructions stem mainly from two sources, legislation which binds the Crown or which, although not binding the Crown, Ministers have undertaken to apply as though it were so binding; and agreements reached in negotiation with the National Staff Side or with Staff Associations in accordance with custom and practice extending back over more than 50 years. Rules and guidance so issued are mandatory on employing departments. In some instances, the method of application of the rules is precisely defined, in others, the principles to be observed are defined and the method of application is left to departments.

It's not quite in the same league as the AA, but it's difficult to understand without a second or third reading.

Even though a lot of MPO's work isn't seen by the public, our reports, circulars, minutes of meetings and many of our letters are read by staff in other departments. We should practise, as well as preach, plain English. Just because we are writing to other civil servants doesn't mean we should use officialese.

Won't plain words destroy the beauty of English?

No. The examples given already could scarcely be called beautiful. If anything, they're tiring. You have to unravel the language in search of the ideas. One of the strengths of English is its capacity to express complex ideas simply and attractively. You show your mastery of those ideas, and of the language, by doing so.

But I can't say exactly what I mean in plain English

Are you sure? What is more to the point, will your reader understand exactly what you mean if you don't use plain English? The reason for most of your writing is to transmit information or ideas from your mind clearly, convincingly and politely into your reader's mind. Of course, you may have to use technical terms. But when you do, it is even more important to use plain English techniques to explain your ideas clearly. There's no need to sacrifice accuracy in the search for clarity. Follow Einstein — 'I like to make things as simple as possible, but not simpler'.

Won't my letters and reports become longer?

Does it matter if they are longer if they are easier to read and therefore quicker to understand? But you will generally find that plain English is shorter. Bradford Council put its Standing Orders for Contracts into plain English. The old Orders had 3,679 words. The new Orders say the same in plain English in 1,850 words. Moreover, loopholes obscured by jargon in the old Orders were exposed — and closed.

What can be learnt from forms?

Forms and questionnaires can be a test-bed for plain English. Form designers learn a great deal about the way people understand language by examining forms which have been returned and talking to the people who filled them in.

Forty people were asked what they thought was meant by the phrase *disposable income* in a form. They took some time to think about it and among the answers were:

'It means you throw it away'

'It's what you spend on your grocery and rent'

'It means getting rid of . . . you've got to sell your furniture and everything before you can get the grant'

'Is that your earnings coming in?'

Time spent on careful skilful drafting means time saved by the people who have to read and fill in forms. And it means time saved by the staff who have to check and process the information.

Application for Civil Service College Training

Please write clearly and use a separate form for each application.

After completing this page, pass this form to your Line Manager who will need to send it to your Departmental Training Officer for approval.

Please allow time for this.

CABINET OFFICE
Management & Personnel Office

CIVIL SERVICE COLLEGE

COL 25

For one day seminars complete this column ONLY.

Course code

Course title

Location *Please tick:*

Belgrave Rd ☐ Sunningdale ☐ Other ☐

Dates

Price

Please tick: Repayment ☐ Non-repayment ☐

Surname (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms)

Forenames

Grade

Department or organisation

Division

Phone number (including GTN if civil servant)

Address to which we should send joining instructions

Postcode

Date of application

For training lasting MORE than one day go on to complete the rest of this page.

Year of joining Civil Service

Date of entry into present grade

Professional qualifications

Academic degrees

Time in your present job

Please describe briefly your present job including the number and grades of staff reporting to you

Please give details of any experience or qualifications that you consider relevant to this course

On the left is a reduced-size version of a redesigned Civil Service College form. Here's a commentary on its language and design.

1 A clear title. In the old-style forms the titles were often missing altogether or subordinate to the departmental name and coat of arms.

2 Clear and polite instructions in large, bold type (even at this reduced size). They replace the impersonal, confusing and even offensive notes which used to say:

> It should be noted that *before* completing page 2 of the form it is necessary to detach page 1 otherwise details entered on page 2 will be duplicated by carbon on to page 1(a). Both sheets must be sent to the College.

The new instructions herald a change in procedure; the expensive and unnecessary carbon system has disappeared.

3 A clear position for this instruction. But could it be misleading? Could you improve it? Is it needed at all?

4 Easy-to-use 'tick-boxes'. They are often simpler than demanding, 'Delete whichever is inapplicable.'

5 Two columns to the page. This layout is often quicker to read and more pleasing to the eye. It gives a more organised structure than one wide column right across the page.

6 A clear instruction. This saves many form-fillers from giving unnecessary details.

7 Adequate space for answers (about 7mm between lines in the full-size form).

Are there any techniques for writing plain English?

Clarity doesn't come naturally to most people — it has to be learnt. Ernest Gowers's classic *The Complete Plain Words* is the bible of techniques for clear writing. Here are some of the important ideas he and others put forward. Bear in mind they are suggestions, not rules.

- The first isn't really a technique at all, more a state of mind. It's attitude. Your writing will become much more conversational and personal if you treat your readers as people and imagine them opposite you in the room. The official who wrote:

In consequence of the non-payment of the above-noted account, an officer of the Board will attend your premises to disconnect your electricity supply facilities

had got his attitude wrong. He wasn't treating his reader as a human being.

- Use short sentences. For writing to civil servants, aim to average 15-25 words. For the public, average 15-20 words. Within these limits you can still be polite and, if you need to be, formal or forceful.

- Use sentences with active verbs. Write:

This report answers your questions

instead of:

Your questions are answered by this report.

The first phrase follows the normal English word order:
subject of the sentence . . . verb . . . object.

This gives your readers much less trouble than:
object . . . verb . . . subject.

- Use verbs instead of nouns created from verbs. For example, use *use* as a verb instead of *the utilisation of.* Reports in particular are full of these grand-sounding noun phrases.

Instead of:

The decision of the department was that employees should work between 9 and 5

write:

The department decided that employees should work between 9 and 5.

- Generally use shorter words instead of their longer equivalents. Try *try* for *attempt, work out* for *calculate,* and *more* for *additional.* There's nothing wrong with long words, though some may be outside your readers' vocabulary. But they are often ingredients of a stodgy style that sends readers to sleep.

- It's often a good idea to address your readers as *you* and refer to yourself or the department as *I* or *we.*

- Use jargon only when it's essential shorthand to people who know what it means. Otherwise explain your technical terms.

- Use a simple style, not a high-sounding, over-educated one. You may know just the right word. Use it by all means — provided you are certain that your readers will understand it.

- Organise your writing in a way that will be helpful to your readers. This may mean, for example, putting the recommendation or decision at the beginning to save your readers skipping to the end to find out what you are leading up to. Remember, readers are invariably in a hurry to get to the point. They want to ride down a motorway, not thrash about in the Hampton Court maze.

Practise the techniques

A straightforward style takes time to develop. At first you may have to spend longer thinking about *how* to say something as well as *what* you are going to say. But eventually it becomes easier to write . . . and easier to read.

Here's part of a water board's letter to a customer. We've left space on the opposite page for you to make it crisper and more vigorous using the techniques of plain English.

Water Resources Act, 1963. Proposed abstraction of water from underground strata at 104, Bridge Road, Woodley.

I refer to your letter dated 31 May 1983 and note that it is proposed to abstract water by means of a well at your property for the purpose of watering your garden.

No licence is required under the above Act where water is abstracted from underground strata for the domestic purposes of the abstractor's own household. It is considered that an abstraction of water from underground strata for the purpose of watering a private garden attached to a dwellinghouse is excepted from the licensing requirements of the above Act as a domestic purpose.

As regards the second paragraph of your letter, the Authority have not imposed restrictions upon pumping water by means of wells for garden watering by sprinklers. However, should there be exceptional drought conditions it would, of course, be essential for the greatest economies in the use of water to be exercised, particularly for such a purpose, so as to avoid wastage.

There's more

Most departmental libraries have some books on plain English. Amongst those in the Cabinet Office library are:

- *The Complete Plain Words,* E Gowers
- *Guidelines for Document Designers,* D B Felker & others
- *Guidelines for Forms Design,* Cabinet Office (MPO)
- *Usage and Abusage,* E Partridge
- *Modern English Usage,* H W Fowler
- *Writing Plain English,* M Cutts & C Maher
- *Daily Mirror Style,* K Waterhouse

The last word ▶

The last word

From Lord Gowrie

Most Ministers have too much to read and I am no exception. But I admit that I have enjoyed this booklet. It is clear and to the point. I look to all who work in the Cabinet Office (MPO) to read, digest, and apply its lessons.

The message is simple. Using plain English is the best way to write. The audience will pay more attention to what you have to say if you can capture their interest and if they don't have to waste time unravelling the language.

The first step is also simple. Put yourself in the position of your readers. Then you will see why your letters, minutes or reports will be more acceptable and more convincing if they are written in plain English.

As a lecturer in English literature I used to set my new students an early exercise to describe a bicycle to a visitor from Mars. They soon found that writing plain English wasn't so easy.

Of course this booklet isn't comprehensive. But if you keep it close to hand and use the tips on pages 8 and 9, they will help. The library has more advanced material when you want it.

Make plain English the MPO style.

Published by Cabinet Office (MPO). Printed by Fenton & Pattison, Manchester M15 4PN.
Designed by Plain English Campaign, Manchester M16 0AA. ISBN 0 7115 0060 6

DRAFT LETTER TO PRIVATE SECRETARIES OF MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF DEPARTMENTS

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS: SECOND PROGRESS REPORT

The Prime Minister has asked me to send you the enclosed copy of a report by the Cabinet Office (MPO) on progress made in the second year of the follow-up to the review of administrative forms.

Clearer forms give a better service to the public, and help to improve efficiency in departments. Over the next 12 months priority will be given to the simplification of legal language, an area which the Prime Minister agrees needs special consideration.

The Prime Minister hopes that Ministers will continue to take a personal interest in the improvement of forms in their departments, and ensure that the momentum of the review is sustained. She has asked Lord Gowrie to commission a further report from the Central Forms Unit (MPO) in April 1985 to show the extent to which standards of forms design and forms control, which will provide a guarantee for the future of progressively better forms, have been taken up across departments.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries of Ministers in charge of departments, Mary Brown (Lord Gowrie's Office), Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office) and Charlotte Caplan (the Efficiency Unit).

VSCABO

CF
Await minute from Lord Gowrie.

CABINET OFFICE

From the Minister of State
Lord Gowrie

MANAGEMENT AND PERSONNEL OFFICE
Great George Street
London SW1P 3AL
Telephone 01-233 8610

The Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP
Secretary of State for
Social Services
Department of Health and
Social Security
Alexander Fleming House
Elephant and Castle
London SE1 6BY

15 May 1984

Dear Norman,

FORMS

From time to time the Cabinet Office (MPO) issues Management Guidelines based upon detailed studies in departments, and setting out good management practice in certain key areas. Subjects already covered include typing and telecommunications, overseas travel, and transport services.

I should like to draw your attention to two new Guidelines (copies enclosed) which have come out of the review of administrative forms. One deals with forms design; the other with forms control. These have been developed by the Cabinet Office (MPO) Central Forms Unit in consultation with forms units in departments, and with professional advice from the Forms Information Centre at Reading University and the Plain English Campaign. The starting point was the recommendations which came out of the Review of Administrative Forms in 1982, co-ordinated by Lord Rayner, which led up to the White Paper: Administrative Forms in Government (Cmnd 8504).

Both Guidelines set high standards, although not, I believe, unrealistic ones. Communication is a vital part of Government and one in which the Civil Service has rightly taken pride in the past. But the forms review has shown that there is

still scope for improvement. The task of preparing good forms, standard letters and explanatory material is an immense one, though; and the time, skills and sheer perseverance it demands are easily underestimated.

The rewards both to the public and to departments, are considerable. The progress reports on the forms review show savings of over £2 million a year. We are now coming to the point where the value of forms which are clear and easy for the public and staff to use will be widely recognised across departments. Forms review will then take on a momentum of its own.

I am reporting on these lines to the Prime Minister. I am suggesting that the Cabinet Office (MPO) continues its co-ordinating work on the forms review and makes a further report to the Prime Minister in April 1985. This will show the extent to which departments have been successful in taking the general principles of forms design and control into their permanent procedures. I have asked the Central Forms Unit to provide a firm basis for judging this by following up progress with the Guidelines over the next year. For the Design Guidelines, this will mean showing how departments are using the techniques of forms design, and demonstrating that they can produce first-class forms. And for the Control Guidelines, it will mean showing how departments have installed effective procedures for ensuring that progressively all forms reach a high standard. Officials will shortly be in touch with your departmental forms unit about the details.

We have now kept the spotlight on forms for two years; far longer than any previous review. It would be only too easy for interest to lapse, when with a little extra push we could see the permanent change in attitudes to forms to which I have referred. Whether we get this will, I believe, depend largely upon the extent to which senior and middle management show a lively interest in forms over the next year. I have asked the Central Forms Unit to keep me in touch with progress during the year. I would be grateful if you would draw the attention of those most concerned in your department to the guidelines and re-emphasise your own personal support for better forms.

I am copying this letter to all Ministers in charge of departments and, for information, to the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Robin Ibbs.

Yours,

LORD GOWRIE

Administrative forms

GUIDELINES

for managers of forms units

Forms design

These guidelines set out the main points on the way to design a form to ensure that it becomes an effective and efficient means of communication.

There are separate guidelines on forms control.

The *forms design* and *forms control* guidelines apply to –

- forms (in the generally understood sense of documents with blanks to be filled up);
- standard letters; and
- leaflets and other written material which help the reader to understand a form.

Summary

Before designing a form –

responsibility
for the design of the form should be clearly allocated; and

the purpose
of the form should be clearly defined.

When designing a form –

the current performance
of the form should be assessed;

the target performance
should be agreed; and

the performance of the new form
should be tested.

To design a good form –

the language
should be straightforward and direct; and

the layout
should be attractive, clear and logical to the reader.

Action

Managers of forms units are asked –

- to ensure that the arrangements in their departments conform with the guidance given in these guidelines; or
- to satisfy themselves that different practices are fully justified.

The Cabinet Office (MPO) will –

- monitor action by departments; and
- revise this guidance in the light of experience with its application.

Cabinet Office

MPO

Guidelines on administrative forms
are based on the experience gained from studies of forms design and control procedures in a wide range of departments. Departments should liaise with trade unions domestically in the usual way about any local changes. A copy of the guidelines has been sent to the National Audit Office.

D W Overington
Cabinet Office (MPO)
Great George Street
London SW1P 3AL

Telephone 01-233 4077

Before designing a form

1 Responsibility
for designing a form should be clearly allocated.

The departmental forms unit
is responsible for–

▶ providing advice and help to the form sponsor on design procedure and on points of language and layout;

▶ consulting and engaging any specialist design services outside the department; and

▶ designing important forms, and preparing the camera-ready copy (or specifying this for preparation externally) for all forms.

The form sponsor
in the policy or operational division is responsible for the effectiveness and efficiency of the form when it is in use. The sponsor is responsible for–

▶ defining the purpose of the form;

▶ specifying the content of the form;

▶ assessing the current performance;

▶ agreeing the target performance with the forms unit for important forms; and

▶ satisfying himself that an acceptable standard has been achieved.

Policy divisions
are expected to see forms as an integral part of the policies which they recommend. They should consider any potential problems for the forms user when recommending policies which involve the use of forms.

2 The purpose
of the form should be clearly defined in order that effectiveness or failure can be assessed.

The form sponsor should specify the content and identify any constraints. The form sponsor should clearly define the following–

▶ target recipients. Recipients who are likely to have greatest difficulty with the form should be separately identified;

▶ intended action by the recipients;

▶ grade and location of staff who issue and process the form; and

▶ intended action by staff.

When designing a form

3 The current performance
of the form should be assessed.

The form sponsor, with help and advice from the forms unit, should assess the current performance of the form.

This should be done for–

Comprehension
The language and design of the form should be examined to see whether the recipient could find it difficult to understand or use. A similar procedure to that set out under guideline 5 for testing a form would generally be appropriate. For important forms, a sample of those filling in the form should be consulted unless the need for a major redesign is apparent.

Staff who issue and process the form should be asked what difficulties they have with it. Their views should also be sought on the nature and extent of any enquiries made to them about the form, and any suggestions they have for improving it.

Errors
A sample of completed forms should be examined to see where errors are arising, and for important forms, the nature and frequency of particular errors. (See Guidelines on Forms Control, guideline 7.)

Cost
The cost of an important form should be examined to see where the significant costs arise. (See Guidelines on Forms Control, guideline 8.)

Forms units should draw the attention of the form's sponsor and other branches of Management Services to any high costs and frequent errors which could be reduced by changes in the way the policy is expressed or the way the procedures have been designed.

4 The target performance
should be agreed.

Targets for an important form should be agreed between the form sponsor and the forms unit. Corresponding procedures should be adopted for other forms where appropriate.

Targets should cover–

Comprehension
The form should be designed for the recipients who find greatest difficulty in understanding and completing it.

An important form should be tested as part of the design process, and the aim should be that at least 90% of the people with whom it is tested should understand it. Less formal ways will be sufficient to check comprehension for other forms.

All staff issuing and processing the form must fully understand it.

Errors
The aim should be that all recipients should complete and return the form correctly, but the 90% standard is more realistic. (See Guidelines on Forms Control, guideline 7.) It may be necessary to accept a lower proportion of correctly completed forms if a large number of the recipients have reading difficulties.

Cost
The cost of the form when target performance has been achieved should be estimated for an important form. (See Guidelines on Forms Control, guideline 8.)

The benefit which the department and the public stand to gain from achieving the target performance should be calculated for an important form. This should be done by comparing–

▶ current cost with target cost; and

▶ current effectiveness with target or forecast effectiveness.

The forms unit should provide an estimate of the cost of the unit's involvement when this is likely to be significant.

5 The performance of the new form
should be tested.

The form sponsor, with help and advice from the forms unit, should test the form to make sure that the targets have been met.

This should be done for–

Comprehension
The forms designer should first check the impression which the form gives by considering objectively–

▶ is it attractive?

▶ does it appear easy to follow and complete?

▶ is it clear what it is about and what the recipient has to do with it?

▶ does it only give or ask for necessary information? (Many forms include inessential material which detracts from the purpose of the form.)

Forms designers are not, however, the best judge of their own creations. The designer should ask someone else (preferably someone who does not deal with the subject, and for forms which go to the public, someone outside the Civil Service) for an honest criticism in response to four questions–

▶ what is your first reaction?

▶ are there any parts which the reader might find it difficult to understand?

▶ are there any areas which the reader might find it difficult to fill in?

▶ will the reader know what to do with the form once it has been completed and where to turn for advice?

The designer or the form sponsor should ask the staff who will issue and process the form for their views.

An important form should be tested more rigorously against the performance target with the help of the forms unit.

Errors
The form sponsor should check for an important form whether the target has been achieved by comparing the error rate with the target after the form has been in use for several months.

The form designer may also wish to look critically at a sample of completed forms to see why errors are still occurring and note where further improvements can be made at the next opportunity.

Cost
The forms sponsor should check once an important form is in use that target savings for the department have been realised and that target improvements in effectiveness have been achieved.

The forms unit should calculate the cost of the design work and compare this with their estimate.

To design a good form

6 **The language** used in forms should be straightforward and direct.

Plain English is not patronising. Even if it is not necessary to use simple language on a particular form (for example, an internal form), forms which are straightforward and well-designed teach by example. The following guidelines are generally accepted as good practice–

▶ use plain English. Avoid acronyms, legal and civil service jargon, and use modern words which the reader will understand;

▶ address the reader personally, preferably as *you*;

▶ use verbs instead of nouns created from verbs. For example, *rely* instead of *reliance, use* instead of *utilization;*

▶ use the active or imperative form of the verb.

active: *This leaflet answers your questions.*

—not: *Your questions are answered by this leaflet.*

imperative: *Please return this form by 15 October*

—not: *This form should be returned by 15 October;*

▶ use short sentences. 15–20 words on average;

▶ be firm with warnings without being legalistic or intimidating. Emphasise the warning sensibly by using, for example, bold type or a second colour. Link the warning visually with any declaration or signature.

7 **The layout** of the form should be clear, logical and attractive to the reader.

Writing and designing should always be considered together because they influence and complement each other. The following guidelines are generally accepted as good practice:

General principles

▶ do not allow the form to look crowded or cluttered. Space is an essential feature of forms. Use it to help the reader recognise the structure of the information it contains;

▶ use between 35 and 65 characters (6–12 words) to a line when dealing with solid text;

▶ make it obvious where the answer to any question has to be written and allow sufficient space for the reply which the reader wants to give; and

▶ use bold type for emphasis. Avoid strings of continuous capitals; these are difficult to read.

Top and tail

▶ give a form a short explicit title. This should show–

subject: *legal aid; recruitment to the department*

function: *application; certificate of appointment*

addressee: *graduates; taxpayers earning over £10,000 pa* – unless this is self-evident;

▶ show the reference number clearly if it is likely to be used;

▶ show clearly what the reader has to do after completing the form. Highlight any deadlines;

▶ keep declarations and undertakings short and simple, and not intimidating; and

▶ give an office or section (and, where appropriate, a name) and the address and telephone number for enquiries.

Organisation of text

▶ use a sequence that will seem logical to the reader. This helps the reader complete the form;

▶ make any instructions on how to complete the form stand out from the text;

▶ keep the number of *official use* areas to a minimum, and separate them in a simple way from the rest of the form;

▶ place guidance notes close to the relevant question. Readers often ignore separate leaflets and notes. But if these are unavoidable, use the same sequence in both and use clear typographic cues to help the reader to refer from one to the other; and

▶ avoid asking the reader to transfer information (for example, code numbers) from one part of the form to another.

Specification for production

▶ use standard paper sizes (A4 or A5), single or folded, wherever possible;

▶ use a type size where the height of a lower-case x is at least 1.5mm (generally 8–10 point);

▶ use a straightforward typeface. Many people consider that a serif typeface (print with tails) is easier to read for continuous text such as leaflets;

▶ use fixed spacing between words (which will give a ragged edge to the right);

▶ allow space between lines of about a quarter of the typesize; and

▶ where a form may be filled in by typewriter, draw any lines to assist completion at multiples of $\frac{1}{6}$ of an inch apart.

Administrative forms

GUIDELINES

for managers of forms units

Forms control

These guidelines set out the main points on the way to control forms to ensure that the forms used by a department are both necessary and well-designed.

There are separate guidelines on forms design.

The *forms control* and the *forms design* guidelines apply to –

- forms (in the generally understood sense of documents with blanks to be filled up);
- standard letters; and
- leaflets and other written material which help the reader to understand a form.

Summary

To support a forms control programme –

responsibility
for forms control should be clearly allocated; and

publicity
should be given to the importance of good forms.

To control forms efficiently –

important forms
should be identified;

a review programme
should be set up and maintained; and

regular reports
should be made to senior management.

To give management information –

central records
should be kept; and

error rates and costs
should be worked out for all important forms.

Action

Managers of forms units are asked –

- to ensure that the arrangements in their departments conform with the guidance given in these guidelines; or
- to satisfy themselves that different practices are fully justified.

The Cabinet Office (MPO) will –

- monitor action by departments; and
- revise this guidance in the light of experience with its application.

Cabinet Office

MPO

Guidelines on administrative forms
are based on the experience gained from studies of forms design and control procedures in a wide range of departments. Departments should liaise with trade unions domestically in the usual way about any local changes. A copy of the guidelines has been sent to the National Audit Office.

D W Overington
Cabinet Office (MPO)
Great George Street
London SW1P 3AL

Telephone 01-233 4077

To support a forms control programme

1 Responsibility
for the control of forms in the department should be clearly allocated.

The departmental forms unit
is responsible for the overall control of the forms in the department. This includes–

▶ identifying responsibility for the design and production of forms;

▶ identifying the sponsor for each form;

▶ promoting the importance of good forms;

▶ identifying important forms which merit special attention;

▶ co-ordinating a programme for forms review;

▶ reporting to senior management on progress with the review and on the state of the forms which are in use in the department; and

providing advice and help to the form sponsor on–

▶ costing forms;

▶ measuring the potential benefits from improved forms and setting performance targets;

▶ monitoring results and setting performance indicators.

Senior management
is responsible for–

▶ satisfying themselves that the forms in use are necessary and cost effective;

▶ emphasising the importance of effective forms; and

▶ providing the resources and organisation for producing cost-effective forms.

The form sponsors
in the policy and operational divisions are responsible for the quality and the cost of producing and using the forms they sponsor; and in particular for making sure that every form is–

▶ necessary;

▶ effective; and

▶ efficient in use.

Producing good forms calls for co-operation between staff in the forms unit and those in the policy and operational divisions. Many departments have appointed forms liaison officers in policy and operational divisions to work with the forms unit. There should be clearly understood procedures for resolving any differences between the forms unit and the policy or operational branches over the progress which is being made with the review, or the appropriate design or wording of a form, and for drawing the attention of senior management to any legal or procedural requirement which appears to reduce the effectiveness of a form.

2 Publicity
should be given to the importance which the Government attaches to good forms.

Good forms are important for the following reasons–

▶ forms are widely used. The Civil Service uses over 2,000 million each year;

▶ forms are the public face of the department;

▶ forms deal with important subjects. They touch the life and finances of every family, household and business;

▶ forms directly affect the extent to which a policy works in practice; and

▶ forms cost a lot to fill in and process. Inefficient procedures and misunderstandings which result from poor forms waste time and money.

The Government's policy
is that there should be a sustained programme of action to reduce the number of forms wherever possible and to simplify those which are essential. (Administrative Forms in Government: Cmnd 8504.)

The forms unit should promote publicity for good forms, for example through–

▶ staff training;

▶ office circulars;

▶ displays of good forms; and

▶ regular reports to senior management on the standard of forms designed by the department.

The purpose of the publicity
should be to inform staff who have a part to play in creating good forms of the importance which the Government attaches to this, and in particular to show convincingly–

▶ what is meant by good and bad forms;

▶ the value of good forms to the department and the public; and

▶ the nature and extent of personal responsibility.

Publicity should be directed to–

▶ managers in policy and operational divisions;

▶ staff who give legal or technical advice;

▶ form sponsors; and

▶ staff who use forms as part of their job.

To control forms efficiently

3 Important forms,
which merit special attention, should be identified.

All forms should be well designed but it will take time to achieve this. The forms unit should consider the following points when deciding whether an in-depth review of a form or group of forms is necessary; its priority; and the amount of effort to devote to it–

▶ the number of forms issued each year;

▶ the target readership;

▶ the subject matter;

▶ the error rate; and

▶ the cost of the form to produce, issue, complete and process.

New forms
should be approved at a suitable level in the department. The need for every new form should be carefully examined. The forms unit should be involved at an early stage in policy and administrative discussions when the need, content and design of important forms are considered.

4 A programme
should be maintained for reviewing all forms at regular intervals.

The forms unit should co-ordinate a programme covering–

▶ the regular review of all forms;

▶ in-depth reviews of important forms, or groups of forms; and

▶ studies into aspects of forms control covering all forms across the department.

The review programme should provide for the following areas to be examined either when a form comes up for review, or by separate studies covering all forms, or groups of forms. Questions marked ▷ may be better dealt with through separate studies.

Need

▷ Is the form still used? Storage space is expensive.

▶ Is it necessary (rather then desirable) to give or collect the information?

▶ Is there a better way of communication?

▷ Can two or more forms be merged to save design effort and simplify printing and storage, without an undue loss of intelligibility?

Design

▶ Is the form effective and efficient as a means of communication? (See Guidelines on Forms Design.)

▷ Is the review of the form unnecessarily constrained because it is prescribed by legislation?

▷ Is sufficient time allowed for review and redesign?

▷ Would a house style be worthwhile?

Production

▷ Is suitable typesetting equipment used? IBM typesetters produce forms to an acceptable standard. But phototypesetters give higher quality, greater flexibility and better design and storage facilities.

▷ Is the paper and method of printing suitable for the purpose. Important forms may call for special standards.

Use

▶ Are the forms readily available at the right time to those who issue them?

▶ Is the use excessive? Do the forms go to the right people?

▷ Does the stock control system make the best use of storage space?

▷ Does the re-order programme work effectively?

5 Reports
should be made to senior management at regular intervals.

Experience in departments has shown that the support of Ministers and senior management is necessary if major improvements are to be achieved.

The forms unit should–

▶ report progress with the forms review;

▶ draw attention to particularly good or bad forms and to notable achievements;

▶ report annually to senior management on the state of the forms in use across the department.

To give management information

6 **Central Records**
should be kept.

Records are needed to plan and conduct the review, eliminate duplicate and redundant forms, control the introduction of new forms and to provide information on progress with the review.

The forms unit should ensure that they have ready access to the following information for all forms–

- number and title;
- purpose;
- target readership;
- number issued and number returned each year;
- method of production;
- size of print order and estimated life;
- date of last reprint;
- any statutory control over design or language;
- date of last review;
- name and post of officer responsible for the form;

and, for all important forms

- date the form was tested;
- error rate (guideline 7) and date of assessment of error rate; and
- cost (guideline 8) and date of costing.

7 **Error rates**
should be worked out for all important forms.

Error rates are needed to decide whether a form should be reviewed, and if so to determine the target performance. The error rate is often the best performance indicator for a revised form.

The forms unit should work out with the form sponsor the error rate for all important forms.

Line managers in operational divisions should draw the attention of the forms unit to any form where action has to be taken to deal with frequent or persistent errors.

There are five kinds of measurable error–

- failure to understand a form, which has led to an enquiry;
- failure to return a form, when a reminder has to be sent out;
- errors in a returned form where the person who has completed it has to be contacted;
- errors which are amended by the office without reference; and
- trivial errors which do not require amendment.

Records on error rates should include the first four types of error. The reasons for all errors should, however, be investigated when redesigning a form.

The aim is error-free forms; but it is more realistic to expect at least 90% of forms to be completed and returned correctly when they are in normal use. The error rate will not however pick up forms which cause difficulty, but which the recipient eventually understands; nor can all errors be detected from returned forms. A 10% error rate may therefore be an overestimate of success.

8 **Costs**
should be worked out for important forms.

Costs are needed to decide how much effort to spend on improving a form; where this effort should be directed; and to measure the result.

The forms unit should work out with the form sponsor the cost of all important forms.

These costs should cover–

- production: paper, printing, storage, distribution to point of use;
- issue: staff and postage costs;
- completion: time and money spent by the recipient assembling information and maintaining records; understanding, completing and returning the form; obtaining advice; and postage.
- processing: staff and other costs involved in checking the form.

Precise costs are not generally required. Approximate figures will highlight any high-cost aspects which can be examined in detail. A small sample survey will usually show the effect of improvements. The costs caused by the error rate should be separately identified.

Time as a cost

The time taken by staff in businesses should be converted to money terms using the appropriate cost to the business, if known, or otherwise an equivalent Civil Service staff cost.

It is usually sufficient to refer to the time taken by the public in hours. This may be estimated from a small sample survey. A member of the public will normally take more time than a civil servant, and may have to search for documents before he can fill in the form.

It may occasionally be useful to convert this to money terms, for example when comparing the benefit to the public with the extra production cost of a revised form. The national average wage may be used when there is no other rate which is more relevant.

MFJ

7 March 1983

The Prime Minister has now seen the Lord Privy Seal's minute of 28 February enclosing a progress report on the review of administrative forms. She has agreed to the circulation of the report under cover of a slightly revised minute. I attach a copy of the minute which I have signed and I should be grateful if you could arrange for its circulation together with copies of the report.

TF

Mrs Mary Brown
Lord Privy Seal's Office

SUBJECT

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

7 March 1983

Review of Administrative Forms: Progress Report

The Prime Minister has asked me to send you a copy of the report which the Management and Personnel Office has submitted to her, setting out the progress made during the first year of the follow-up to the review of administrative forms.

Mrs. Thatcher believes that the report shows that a promising start has been made. She is glad to see that Ministers have taken a personal interest in the review and hopes that they will give it their full support. The Prime Minister also commends the work of officials who have pursued the follow-up vigorously.

The Prime Minister has asked me to add that she is in no doubt that the quality of forms affects the views of the citizen about the efficiency and humanity of Government administration. A great deal remains to be done; Departments have no less than 250,000 forms in all. The Prime Minister trusts that Departments will step up the momentum of the first year and ensure that the plans proposed by each are delivered. She has asked the Management and Personnel Office to make a further report on progress to herself and the Lord Privy Seal in April 1984.

I am copying this to Private Secretaries of Ministers in charge of Departments and of the Paymaster-General, Mary Brown (Lord Privy Seal's Office), Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office) and Christopher Joubert (Rayner Unit).

TIM FLESHER

The Private Secretary

4

Prime Minister:

This arose from hard Rayners review and is something of a success story, albeit a modest one, given the size of the problem. Agree to circulate report as proposed by the Lord Privy Seal?

TH
2/3

PRIME MINISTER

As amended
MT

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS: PROGRESS REPORT

I attach, in folder attached to file the progress report on the review of administrative forms. We called for this to be submitted a year after the publication, in February 1982, of the White Paper "Administrative Forms in Government" (Cmnd. 8504).

The text consists of a short report (pages 3-15) and of summary reports for each of 26 departments taking part in the follow-up to the White Paper (pages 19-135). It includes examples of forms which have been redesigned, of which the most important example is the Claim for Supplementary Benefit (flagged).

You need read no more than the short report and dip into the departmental summaries; I commend those for DHSS (page 57) and the Inland Revenue (page 81) as of particular interest, not least the reference to the latter's Mobile Tax Advice Centres (page 86).

The report has three main things to say:

(1) It shows what has already been accomplished (see summary on pages 3 and 4). This includes the abolition of 3,600 forms (25% of those examined in 1982-83); the redesign of 2,700; and the overhaul of arrangements for administering and controlling forms.

(2) Generally speaking, departments have gone about the review with a will and are now more aware of the importance of good forms. But we need to keep up the pressure, so that good forms become a habit and that more of our colleagues get committed to reforming their paper.

(3) Getting good forms is a big job. We appear to have no less than 250,000 different forms in all. But the methods we have adopted show that the task is far from impossible. I expect the continuing follow-up to make steady progress where previous efforts - all too often taking the shape of generalised exhortations - have run into the sand.

I recommend that you endorse the report and send it to Ministers in charge of departments. I attach a draft private secretary letter for this purpose. I recommend too that we should call for a further report on the progress made in April 1984, as suggested on page 15 of the report.

There has been much public interest in our forms policy. And pressure groups like the Plain English Campaign will rightly seek to keep us up to the mark. If you endorse the report as I recommend, I will arrange for it to be sent to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and to be published, with appropriate acknowledgement to the part which colleagues and their departments have played in the follow-up.

I am copying this minute to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Chief Secretary, the Paymaster-General, the Minister of State (Commons), Lord Rayner (from whose review our White Paper of February 1982 flowed) and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Dianet Young

BARONESS YOUNG

28 February 1983

DRAFT

Private Secretaries to Ministers in charge of departments

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS: PROGRESS REPORT

1. The Prime Minister has asked me to send you a copy of the report which the Management and Personnel Office has submitted to her, setting out the progress made during the first year of the follow-up to the review of administrative forms.

2. Mrs Thatcher believes that the report shows that a promising start has been made. She is glad to see that Ministers have taken a personal interest in the review and hopes that they will give it their full support. The Prime Minister also commends the work of officials who have pursued the follow-up vigorously.

3. The Prime Minister has asked me to add that she is in no doubt that the quality of forms affects the ~~linkage between Government and the Citizen~~ views of the citizen about the efficiency & humanity of Government administration. A great deal remains to be done ~~if the burden of administration on the public and business is to be brought down to the minimum possible~~ and departments have no kill other 250,000 forms in all. The Prime Minister trusts that departments will ~~keep~~ step up the momentum of the first year and ensure that the plans proposed by each are delivered. She has asked the Management and Personnel Office to make a further report on progress to herself and the Lord Privy Seal in April 1984.

I am copying this to private secretaries of Ministers in charge of departments and of the Paymaster-General, Mary Brown (MPO), Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office) and Christopher Joubert (Rayner Unit).

Good Much 4

Prime Minister:
To note.
18/11

MR FLESHER

cc Mr Priestley

FORMS

You may recall that when the Prime Minister visited the Forms exhibition last month, she commented on the need to increase the take up of family income supplement, and on the FIS application form. You might like to note that DHSS have confirmed to me that the latter is to be reviewed.

B R MORRIS

17 November 1982

Gov Mach:

Administrative Forms:

Sept 80

cc Cabinet
CWO
CO
LUD

Gov mach HU

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

13 October 1982

Dear Private Secretary,

The Prime Minister has recently visited the exhibition on administrative forms, now on display in the Cabinet Office. She hopes that all Ministers will take an opportunity of examining the exhibition when attending meetings there, and ensure that it is displayed in due course to as many officials as possible in their own Departments.

The Prime Minister attaches considerable importance to making progress on Government forms. The contrast in the exhibition between good and bad forms is, she thinks, very striking, in terms of both the public face of Government that forms represent, and the gains in efficiency that are possible.

The Prime Minister is looking forward to receiving the report of progress since the White Paper on Administrative Forms due next February, which the MPO is co-ordinating.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Private Secretaries to all Ministers responsible for Departments.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Flesher

Tim Flesher

Prime Minister:

I thought it worthwhile to follow up your visit; do you agree that I should send the attached minute? There is no reason why we should not have the exhibition in No 10 for a while: it would also give it some prestige. Do you agree that we should do so?

TA 12/10

Pse type & sign, dear P—s — TA.

Mr Flesher

cc
PS/Lord Privy Seal
PS/Permanent Secretary
PS/2nd Permanent Secretary
Mr Priestley

FORMS

The Prime Minister visited the Forms Exhibition yesterday and I am glad that she reaffirmed the drive for better forms.

2 I understand that you agree with the suggestion that we take this opportunity of reminding Ministers of the Government's commitment in this area. I attach accordingly a draft letter for you to send to Private Secretaries.

3 The Prime Minister suggested that the Exhibition could perhaps be moved into No 10 itself, to ensure that Ministers had an opportunity of seeing it. My initial view was that this would be overtaken by writing as in the attached draft. We happened however to see the Chancellor of the Exchequer this morning, who evinced great interest in forms; and who also said that he would not normally pass the Exhibition at its present site. I should therefore be grateful if you could further consider the Prime Minister's suggestion (and I have left the reference to the Cabinet Office in the attached draft in square brackets accordingly).

B R Morris
12 October 1982

We could have it here just for 2 days or so Tues - Thurs. - but let us keep other things full. MT

DRAFT LETTER OF 11 OCTOBER FROM MR FLESHER TO PRIVATE SECRETARIES TO MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

GOVERNMENT FORMS

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3 The Prime Minister is looking forward to receiving the report of progress since the White Paper on administrative forms due next February, which the MPO is co-ordinating.

4 I am sending a copy of this letter to Private Secretaries to all Ministers responsible for Departments.

Ref: A09696

Civil Service

11/10

MR. FLESHER

I gather that the Prime Minister hopes to come and see the Forms Exhibition here in the Cabinet Office this afternoon.

2. I should of course have wanted to be here to receive her myself; but I am afraid that I shall be giving evidence at the Franks Committee at that time. I hope that she will forgive my absence.

RA

Robert Armstrong

11th October 1982

Prime Minister:

Mr FLESHER

Flagged at A is the press notice for the Reading contract and your visit and at B is the White Paper.

cc PS/Lord Privy Seal
Mr Priestley

FORMS EXHIBITION

8/10

The Prime Minister is to visit the Forms Exhibition in the Cabinet Office on Monday 11 October, at 2 40pm. The Lord Privy Seal will accompany her.

2. The background is a Rayner Review which identified scope for considerable improvement in administrative forms. The Government announced a firm policy for fewer and better forms in the White Paper on Administrative Forms, published last February.

Copy with Questions

3. The exhibition is designed to show staff the importance of good forms and the seriousness of the Government's drive for improvement. The opportunity of the Prime Minister's visit has been taken to announce a modest contract with Reading University to provide advice to government departments on forms design. But the main thing is that we are following up the White Paper by means of a small Forms Unit working to me in MPO and co-ordinating the work of similar units in departments. The PM will have a report on progress since the White Paper next February.

4. Mr Priestley and I will be available to answer any enquiries. The Prime Minister might like to look particularly at the 3 most important forms incorporated in the exhibition (the tax return, the supplementary benefit claim form and the VAT return from businesses), at the panels relating to costs, and at the ways in which the centre is promoting good practice. The key issues are:

- Do officials recognise the importance of having good forms?

- What progress are we making now and what successes can we point to?

- Where do we go after February 1983?

B R MORRIS
8 October 1982

A contract to make forms simple to be let to a University. What are Universities doing these days. We have polytechnics, colleges of art & design, further education colleges, institutes etc. and yet Universities go in for design. Why? And £57,000! This is for the LPS to answer - not me!

NR

GR papers

Mr B R MORRIS

cc for optional comment

Mr Flesher

FORMS EXHIBITION: VISIT BY PM ON 11 OCTOBER

I attach a draft minute to Mr Buckley in the LPS's office, following our visit to the Cabinet Office this morning.

2. I should be glad to know whether it makes the points which need making. You might also have a word with Mr Flesher about his copy of this minute and see whether he has any advice for us.

CP

C PRIESTLEY
4 October 1982

Enc: Draft minute

DRAFT OF 4 OCTOBER 1982

Mr BUCKLEY

cc for information
Mr Hatfield (CO)
Miss Goodison (MPO)
Mr B R Morris
Mr Stubbs

FORMS EXHIBITION: VISIT BY PRIME MINISTER, 11 OCTOBER

1. The purpose of this minute is to consult the Lord Privy Seal about arrangements for the Prime Minister's visit to this exhibition, which I have seen in company with Mr Morris and (briefly) with Sir Robert Armstrong.

2. Mr Morris has somewhat re-jigged the exhibition to focus it more immediately and sharply on action since the White Paper. The main intention is to bring the Prime Minister up to date with developments and to remind her that she may look forward to a report early next year on the first twelve months action.

3. The Lord Privy Seal will presumably go to 10 Downing Street and walk through to the Cabinet Office with the Prime Minister. Mr Morris and I will await the Ministerial party in the Cabinet Office. The Lord Privy Seal will no doubt wish to introduce Mr Morris to the Prime Minister (whom he has met before, at one of the financial management presentations in 1981).

4. I suggest that Mr Morris then takes the Ministers to the exhibition in Cockpit Passage and leads them through it. The COI has designed the panels to tell their own story, but I have asked Mr Morris to prepare a commentary, drawing

attention to the main points and filling out some of the detail in which the Ministers might be interested.

5. I understand that the press may be present. You will wish to ascertain the Prime Minister's wishes in this regard with the Press Office at No 10. They may like to form a judgment in company with Mr Morris who could take them over the exhibition. It is perhaps relevant that in my judgement there are only one or two panels which would photograph well in a daily paper.

6. Subject to your consultations with the Press Office, I should be glad to know whether the Lord Privy Seal is content for us to proceed as suggested above.

C PRIESTLEY

FILE VB

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

16 September 1982

Thank you for your letter of 14 September to Tim Flesher, who is away at the moment, about the White Paper on Administrative Forms.

The Prime Minister will be delighted to come and see the exhibition which has been prepared when it is on display in the Cockpit Passage in the Cabinet Office. On present plans, she would come along at 1500 on Monday 11 October.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Ministers in charge of Departments, and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

MCS

D.R.H. Board, Esq.,
Lord Privy Seal's Office.

Sd

010

Management and Personnel Office
Whitehall London SW1A 2AZ
Telephone 01-273 } 4400
GTN 273 }

14 September 1982

Prime Minister

I can find 15 mins at 1500 on Monday 11th October. Agree? ES.

Yes pls

Tim Flesher Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
London SW1

Dear Tim

OPPORTUNITY FOR MINISTERS TO VIEW ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS EXHIBITION

In its White Paper on Administrative Forms (Cmnd 8504) published earlier this year, the Government announced a comprehensive programme to get rid of some of the 2,000 million forms and leaflets which departments issue annually and to improve those which have to be retained. As part of this drive, an exhibition has been prepared and is on show to civil servants at a number of locations. It drives home the importance of good forms and the price of bad ones, both in extra administration and for members of the public and businesses who have to complete them.

When Sir Robert Armstrong saw the display he suggested that Ministers might find it both convenient and of interest if it were shown for a period in the Cabinet Office. The Exhibition will therefore be on display from 27 September to 22 October in the Cockpit Passage and the Lord Privy Seal is glad to commend it to her colleagues.

The MPO will be reporting to the Lord Privy Seal and the Prime Minister next February on the progress which departments are making in implementing the White Paper, but if the Prime Minister were to be able to find time to see the Exhibition the Lord Privy Seal would be very willing to explain it and the work which is in progress.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to Ministers in charge of departments, and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely

Douglas Board

D R H BOARD
Assistant Private Secretary

cc Mr Ingham

Gov mach

Management and Personnel Office
Whitehall London SW1A 2AZ
Telephone 01-273 4400
GTN 273

WM 15/2

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

15 February 1982

Andrew Jackson Esq
Private Secretary to the Secretary of State
Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON SW1H 9AT

Dear Andrew

ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS IN GOVERNMENT: WHITE PAPER

... I attach, for information, a copy of the Confidential Final Revise of this White Paper. It takes account of Ministers' comments on the draft circulated with the Chancellor of the Duchy's letter to the Home Secretary of ~~27~~ January, for which she was grateful. The White Paper is being published at 10.30 am on 17 February.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to the Private Secretaries to the other recipients of the Chancellor of the Duchy's letter.

Yours sincerely

Douglas Board

D R H BOARD
Assistant Private Secretary

RG

Wh 16/2

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY
ALEXANDER FLEMING HOUSE
ELEPHANT AND CASTLE
LONDON S.E.1

TELEPHONE: 01-407 5522

Baroness Young
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Management and Personnel Office
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AZ

12 February 1982

Dear Janet.

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

Thank you for your letter of 27 January 1982 with which you sent a copy of the draft White Paper.

The review has shown clearly that improvements in forms design and production will not by themselves bring about the improvement in effectiveness of forms which is so obviously needed. The much more difficult task of changing attitudes and working practices at all levels within Departments must be given priority and tackled effectively. For that reason I welcome the emphasis the White Paper gives to bringing forms work squarely within the wider 'good management' programme for Government Departments.

I fully agree with the detailed proposals set out in paragraph 14 of the draft. Indeed I have already initiated action on the basis of the DHSS report, which will meet them in full. A new forms unit, using three of the four officials who carried out the DHSS review, has already started work and I expect professionally - trained and experienced forms designers to join the unit shortly. The new unit is drawing up plans for a review of major DHSS forms which will require policy and operational branches within the Department to re-appraise the need for the forms now used and to re-design those that we retained, to simplify them and suit them better to their purpose. The forms unit has been located within the DHSS Management Support Division as recommended and will be responsible to the Permanent Secretary through the Principal Establishment Officer. The forms unit will prepare progress reports at regular intervals.

I am arranging for copiess of the DHSS study report to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses on 17 February and to be on sale to the public thereafter as indicated in Annex 3 of the draft White Paper.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Cabinet colleagues, the Attorney General, the Lord Advocate, the Chief Whip, Sir Robert Armstrong, Sir Douglas Wass and Sir Derek Rayner.

Yours ever

Norman

NORMAN FOWLER

BK

file

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

11 February 1982

Review of Administrative Forms:
White Paper

Thank you for your letter of 8 February.

The Prime Minister is content with the proposed arrangements for the publication of this White Paper on 17 February. In particular, she is happy for the White Paper to be presented in the name of the Chancellor of the Duchy. She has noted the prices that will be charged for the White Paper, and for the reports by departments that will accompany it, which you let me have over the telephone.

I am copying this letter to David Heyhoe (Lord President's Office) and Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office).

W. F. S. RICKETT

D.R.H. Board, Esq.

BK

PRIME MINISTER

I attach a letter from Janet Young's office setting out the timetable for publication of the White Paper on the Review of Administrative Forms. The White Paper will be published on Wednesday, 17 February. The White Paper on Roads will also be published that day, but the Lord President does not feel there will be any conflict between the two White Papers.

You asked about the price of this White Paper. HMSO will charge between £2.50 and £3.50 for the White Paper itself. A number of reports by Departments on the work they have done in reviewing their administrative forms will be published at the same time. These will range in price from £1.50 for the short report by the Home Office to £17.45 for the 200 page report by the DHSS.

The Chancellor of the Duchy would like to present the White Paper to Parliament in her own name, in the same way that the White Paper on "Efficiency in the Civil Service" was presented by the then Lord President.

Content?

WM

Yes MT.

10 February 1982

WR
MR

CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS Telephone 01-233 8224

9 February 1982

The Rt Hon The Baroness Young

Dear Janet.

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

Thank you for my copy of your letter of 27 January to Willie Whitelaw.

The draft White Paper is a positive and comprehensive response to the problems which the review exposed. Provided Ministers and their departments make a reality of the good words it uses, it will do credit to both the Government and the Civil Service. Best wishes for the day of publication.

I had only a few minor suggestions to make on the draft and my office has passed these to your officials.

I am copying this only to Clive Whitmore, Robert Armstrong, Douglas Wass and John Cassels.

Yours ever
Derek

DEREK RAYNER

Management and Personnel Office
Whitehall London SW1A 2AZ
Telephone 01-273 4400
GTN 273

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

8 February 1982

Willie Rickett Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

Dear Willie

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS: WHITE PAPER

The Chancellor of the Duchy circulated a draft of this White Paper to Cabinet colleagues and other Ministers in charge of Departments on 27 January. Subject to some drafting amendments, no objection has been raised to publication. I should therefore be glad to know whether the Prime Minister is content for the White Paper to be presented to Parliament in the name of the Chancellor of the Duchy, in the same way as the White Paper on 'Efficiency in the Civil Service' (Cmnd. 8293) was presented by the then Lord President.

As you know we are aiming to publish the White Paper on 17 February. I would be glad to know from you, and the other recipients of this letter, whether the following detailed arrangements are satisfactory.

Monday, 15 February	Circulation of Confidential Final Revise of White Paper to Cabinet.
Tuesday, 16 February	Arranged Written Answers in both Houses announcing intention to present the White Paper to Parliament the following day
Wednesday, 17 February 9.30 am	Presentation of White Paper to Parliament
9.30-10.30 am	White Paper sent to Select Committee on Treasury and Civil Service
10.30 am	Publication
11.00 am	Chancellor of the Duchy's Press Conference

I am copying this letter to David Heyhoe (Lord President's Office) and Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office).

Yours sincerely

Douglas Board

D R H BOARD
Assistant Private Secretary

Wh 8/2 Govt Mach

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD
WHITEHALL PLACE, LONDON SW1A 2HH

From the Minister

Baroness Young
Chancellor of the
Duchy of Lancaster
Management and Personnel Office
Whitehall
London SW1A 2AZ

8 February 1982

Dear Janet

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

You sent me a copy of your letter to Willie Whitelaw of ~~27~~ January enclosing the draft White Paper on "Administrative Forms in Government". Subject to a very small factual amendment which my people are conveying separately to yours, I am content with the White Paper, and in particular with the programme of action set out in paragraph 14. My Department already has a Forms Unit, and work is already under way, in response to our own Departmental Report, to review all the forms presently in use in the light of the White Paper principles.

I am content for an edited version of the Departmental Report to be made available on the basis you suggest. It will be priced at £5.00 including postage; and a note of decisions taken will accompany the Report. A copy of this note is attached.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, other members of Cabinet, the Attorney General, the Lord Advocate, the Chief Whip (Commons), Sir Robert Armstrong, Sir Douglas Wass and Sir Derek Rayner.

Yours ever
Peter

PETER WALKER

RAYNER REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

Report on Forms in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Note of Decisions Taken by the Ministry

1. The general thrust of the Report has been accepted by the Ministry, particularly the proposals that action should be taken to simplify and re-design forms to reduce error rates and checking problems. The Ministry has already started a review of all forms with this objective in mind, and improved departmental instructions will shortly be issued in the light of the Government's policy announced in the White Paper. These instructions will incorporate as appropriate the detailed recommendations of the MAFF Rayner Report.

2. The Ministry already has a Forms Unit, and its work will be extended as staff resources permit. It has been decided that the Unit should remain within Management Services Division, where the specialist expertise required for forms design work resides. As for the setting up of a data base of information at each Divisional Office, possibilities in this area will be receiving urgent study as part of the development of information technology generally within the Ministry.

3. Study of the possibility of using Census information for the hill livestock compensatory allowance and other similar purposes has revealed major obstacles to such a change, eg the need to enact main legislation and to re-negotiate schemes in Brussels: there could also be a commitment to higher public expenditure on the relevant allowances. The suggestion is not being adopted. However, the HCA 9 claim form examined in detail by the Rayner Scrutiny Officer has now been thoroughly revised, and a number of other livestock subsidy forms and leaflets are currently being revised with the objective of increasing comprehension, cutting down error rates and facilitating processing. The effectiveness of the revisions will be reviewed later this year.

4. All forms and leaflets in the investment grant series are being reviewed with the advice of HMSO, and will be issued in revised formats as soon as possible.

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES
AND FOOD

FEBRUARY 1982

Y SWYDDFA GYMREIG
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switsfwrdd)
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WELSH OFFICE
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switchboard)
01-233 6106 (Direct Line)
From The Secretary of State for Wales

The Rt Hon Nicholas Edwards MP

5 February 1982

Dear Jack

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 27 January to Willie Whitelaw, and for inviting my comments on the draft White Paper on Administrative Forms in Government.

I am generally content with the draft and I welcome the idea of an exhibition of forms. I hope to see the exhibition for myself, and my officials who are most concerned will also visit it. They welcome the promised guidance and help from your people.

You will be interested to know that my Department has been classifying the forms it uses and that during the course of this exercise, which is nearing its conclusion, more than 2,000 forms have been identified. This extraordinary number stems, of course, from the multi-functional role of my Department, and clearly indicates the scope for rationalisation and the magnitude of the task.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

Yours ever

Nick

The Rt Hon the Baroness Young
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Management and Personnel Office
Whitehall
LONDON
SW1A 2AZ

WM 8/2

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG
01-233 3000

25 February 1982

The Rt. Hon. Baroness Young
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

Dear Janet

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

I am generally content with the draft White Paper enclosed with your letter of 27 January. I am pleased to note some favourable comments on my own Departments, but I would like to raise the following points:-

1. The Plain English Campaign Awards referred to at paragraph 3 were made for leaflets; a new leaflet in the case of the Customs award. In line 8 "redesigned forms" should read "new leaflets".

2. The draft refers in paragraph 14(e) to forms testing. I accept the general desirability of testing forms before they are introduced, but this will not always be possible because of time constraints, eg on the implementation of Budget changes. I would prefer the third sentence of this paragraph to read "Forms will be tested before they are introduced, wherever possible, to check .... ."

3. At paragraph 10 of Annex 1 Sir Derek Rayner says that "Departmental teams could not find out how many forms their own Departments had in use or even the usage rates for those forms they examined." Appendix III of the Customs report gave details of the numbers of different types of forms used by the Department and the estimated annual consumption whilst Appendix I of the Revenue's report gave the number of different forms in the Department together with a classification, and the forms studied in the review were quantified in the text. Perhaps the remarks could be softened along the following lines:

"Some of the Departmental teams were not able to find out .."

4. In respect of Annex 2, Customs have suggested that the second paragraph of the summary of their report would be more accurate as follows:

/"Some

"Some proposals are still being considered but action is being taken on recommendations which will result in a saving of eight kinds of forms and have already led to about 1.5 million fewer forms being issued each year. Savings to the Department are estimated at £32,000 and, to businesses, at £2.5 million."

Customs and Excise and Inland Revenue will be making their reports available to the public and Parliament on the same basis as your own Department.

I am copying this letter to recipients of yours.

GEOFFREY HOWE

WM 5/2

QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SWIH 9AT

February 1982

Dear Janet

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

Thank you for your letter of 27 January, with which you enclosed a copy of the draft White Paper. I am content with the terms of the draft.

I can also confirm that there will be no objection to making the Home Office report available on the same basis as those of Sir Derek Rayner and the central team. Our officials have already been in touch about the details.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

Yours

Willie

The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Young

Mr RICKETT

In Private Office?

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

1. You will have received today a copy of the Chancellor of the Duchy's letter to Mr Whitelaw enclosing the draft White Paper on forms. We will aim to let you have a note by the end of next week summarising any points which are made and putting forward a draft response from the Prime Minister.

2. Much of the draft has come from this office and we are generally content with it. There are still some awkward passages (eg paragraph 10, "an important source of contact" is dull and heavy), but these can be ironed out before it goes to print.

Mrs E Thoms
28 January 1982

cc

I have put the CDL's letter to the PM for the weekend box. We can always go back with comments from Rayner next week.

WR
28/1

Note.
I passed on the Prime Minister's requirement to Lady Young's staff this morning.
28/1 TW

Sort Back

Walter the Prime
The White Paper! cc Lord Cockfield asked questions should be
cc Mr Ingham MO, Mr Patrick

Management and Personnel Office
Whitehall London SW1A 2AZ
Telephone 01-273 4400
GTN 273

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

27 January 1982

The Rt Hon William Whitelaw CH MC MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON
SW1H 9AT

- Prime Minister 4

To note that Lady Young is now aiming at Wednesday 17 February for the publication of this White Paper.

WR 28/1

Dear Willie,

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

The Prime Minister's Principal Private Secretary wrote to yours on 25 January, to say that the Prime Minister had invited me to consult colleagues on the draft of a White Paper as soon as possible. I now attach a draft, and I should be glad to know whether you, and those to whom I am copying this letter, are content with it.

The target date for publication is 17 February, so I should be grateful if I might have your reply by no later than Friday 5 February.

The draft White Paper refers (in paragraph 5) to publication of the Reports which lie behind it. My Department is arranging for copies of the Reports by Sir Derek Rayner and the central team to be available for purchase here. I shall also arrange for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament. I would be grateful if you and the other Ministers concerned can confirm that you and they are content for the Departmental Reports to be made available to the public and to Parliament on the same basis.

Publication will be accompanied by an exhibition on forms, which will include examples of some of the very good work Departments are now doing. We shall be keeping the exhibition running in the Old Admiralty Building for some time afterwards, and I very much hope that you and other Ministers in charge of Departments will encourage those of your officials concerned to visit it. If you or other Ministerial colleagues would like to see it, it would of course be very encouraging to all concerned. My office would be glad to make the necessary arrangements.

My officials will be in touch with Departments about implementation of the measures to control and review forms. I am very glad to see that action is already in hand in a number of Departments. I also

recognise that the precise arrangements required will vary according to the circumstances of each Department. What is important is that effective systems for the control and review of forms on the lines recommended by Sir Derek Rayner are introduced, and in ways which avoid unnecessary complication and bureaucracy.

I am copying this letter, and the draft White Paper, to the Prime Minister, other members of Cabinet, the Attorney General, the Lord Advocate, the Chief Whip, Sir Robert Armstrong, Sir Douglas Wass and Sir Derek Rayner.

Yours ever

David

BARONESS YOUNG

DRAFT WHITE PAPER (27.1.82)

ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS IN GOVERNMENT

Introduction

1. Government forms touch on the finances and life of every family and business in the country. Their purposes include informing the public about their rights, enabling a business to discharge its legal responsibilities, or making assessments for taxation, pensions or grants. Forms are more convenient than letters, telephone calls or meetings over a wide range of business. Thus, most households will deal each year with forms covering Income Tax, Social Security benefits of one kind or another, and the renewal of the Television Licence. Most businesses send in returns on Value Added Tax, National Insurance contributions and Sickness Benefits.

2. Over 2,000 million Government forms and leaflets are used by the public each year. That is 36 for every man, woman and child in the country. The price to the taxpayer is not known; but if each form costs just 10 pence in all, it would be in the region of £200 million. There is also the substantial cost to the people who use the forms. Even good forms impose some burdens. Bad forms make for worse problems and extra costs. They also damage relations between Government and the public and undermine the efforts of civil servants, particularly those in local offices, to provide an efficient and helpful service.

Review of Administrative Forms

3. A number of Departments have been putting considerable effort into improving their forms and pamphlets as part of their day-to-day

work by making them more intelligible, accurate and economical. As a result, there are notable examples of marked improvements in certain important forms, such as the one for renewing Vehicle Excise Duty. The Department of Health and Social Security and HM Customs and Excise won first prizes in the Plain English Campaign Awards for 1981 with redesigned forms. There will also be a substantial reduction - of about a quarter - in the number of statistical forms sent to businesses each year as a result of the implementation of the 1980 Review of the Government Statistical Services (Cmnd. 8236).

4. Building on this good foundation, the Government decided that a more comprehensive and critical appraisal of administrative forms was needed as part of its wider policies for good management and excellence in its own administration. This review has been larger, more thorough and more far reaching than any previously undertaken. It was conducted primarily by civil servants drawn from the eight Departments participating in the review and from the Management and Personnel Office (MPO). It was co-ordinated by Sir Derek Rayner.

Results of the Review

5. Annex 1 of this White Paper contains a summary by Sir Derek Rayner of how the review was undertaken and of its results. Annex 2 contains summaries of the individual Departmental studies within the review. A full list of the Reports, with the sources from which they are available, is at Annex 3.

6. The review will result in the redesign of more than half the sample of 93 kinds of forms examined and the withdrawal of over a quarter. This in turn means that 5 million fewer forms will be issued each year.

7. Getting forms right takes time and care. Only a very small selection of Government forms was looked at in the review. But, on the basis of this examination, it has shown that more needs to be done if there is to be a successful and sustained drive to simplify and reduce forms across the board so that all forms, in all Departments, are as good as they can be.

The Government's Strategy

8. The Government's policy is to improve the efficiency of the Civil Service (White Paper on Efficiency in the Civil Service, Cmnd.8293). This is about much more than cutting out waste. It is about ensuring that the citizen receives good service, that the public understand their rights and duties, and that administration gives the best possible value for money. The proper control and use of forms is vital to this since good forms are an integral part of good administration. The Government is therefore undertaking a continuous and sustained programme of action to reduce the number of forms wherever possible and to simplify those that are essential. This is based on the findings of the review and on Sir Derek Rayner's recommendations. The practical implications of this are as follows.

9. First, the Government's forms policy is an essential element of its wider programme for good management in the Civil Service, including giving increased responsibility to individual managers. This will be progressively supported and helped by other work already in hand, notably the streamlining and simplification of administrative processes through departmental scrutinies, Service-wide reviews and other efficiency studies.

10. Secondly, forms deserve special attention as an important source of contact with Government for many people. But a form

should not be managed as though it existing in its own right. It is only part of a piece of administration.

11. Thirdly, getting good forms is a practical and time-consuming job. For example, staff in policy and operational branches should get away from their desks and find out what people make of the forms for which they are responsible. They should also take account of the valuable ideas and knowledge of staff in local and other offices who deal directly with the public. This requires determination and commitment from top management, line management and the Principal Establishment Officer in each Department and, at the centre, from the Management and Personnel Office.

12. Finally, it is for each Minister and Permanent Secretary to make their policy and operational branches responsible for good forms as part of their responsibility for good administration; to ensure that they get technical and professional help, for example form designers, when it is needed; and, crucially, to check regularly that their policy is being implemented in practice.

Action

13. Most recommendations in the departmental reviews have been accepted by the Ministers concerned and action is under way (see Annex 2).

14. Over and above this, all Government Departments will set up continuing programmes to improve and control their forms. The main elements will be:

(a) in the case of existing forms, the responsible branches will review systematically the need for the forms concerned and their cost-effectiveness to Government and the public. A staged approach will be necessary, beginning with the

forms which are used most or with the procedures which most use forms, as it will not be possible to cover all areas immediately;

(b) in the case of new forms, originating branches will have to justify their need and cost-effectiveness - again including, wherever possible, the costs to those who will fill them in;

(c) each Department will provide a small forms unit, from within its existing staff, to advise policy and operational branches on form design, control and review. Over time, the number of staff available for this work with relevant professional skills will be increased;

(d) existing training for both line management and the staff in forms units will be developed and extended;

(e) Departments will ensure that, progressively, forms work as they are meant to and are clear and intelligible for their purpose. Their language must be plain and simple, avoiding jargon. Forms will be tested before they are introduced to check that the public can understand and use them easily. The Central Office of Information and HM Stationery Office will help Departments with this work as necessary;

(f) the Permanent Secretary will receive from his Principal Establishment Officer an annual report on the state of the forms in his Department, including the results of the reviews mentioned above. Wherever possible, this should be part of existing reporting systems to top management.

15. Experience shows that it is all too easy for efforts to improve forms to flag. The Government is encouraged by the good work already under way in Departments. It expects that this White Paper will give it added momentum and make it general. This requires some impetus from the centre. The Management and Personnel Office will therefore help forward the work. It has designated one of its officials to have special responsibility for forms. He will keep in touch with the work that Departments will do under their own hand; see that problems which are identified are not allowed to slow down the programme; promote the exchange of ideas and experience, both within the Civil Service and between it and those with outside experience; arrange such central training as is needed with the Civil Service College; and see that good practice is made widely known. After a year, the Management and Personnel Office will report progress with the implementation of the Government's decisions and the steps taken to promote best practice to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

SUMMARY OF REPORTS ON THE REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS BY SIR DEREK RAYNER

What is an "administrative form"

1. An administrative form is a means by which the citizen or the firm on the one hand and the Government on the other talk to each other over an immensely wide range of business. For example, a household will deal in the course of a year with forms like the Income Tax Return and the renewal of the TV Licence and Vehicle Excise Duty on a car.

2. An administrative form is not about statistics, therefore. It is usually a part of a scheme of administration, as various as collecting taxes or awarding grants. It is a mechanism which connect the Government and the citizen or the firm.

3. The Government form is a common feature of modern life. Some that I have seen are an admirable practical expression of a democratic Government's wish and duty to serve and inform the citizen well. Others, less praiseworthy, seem to be the practical expressions of a remote officialdom. All are a sign of the vastness of central government administration.

4. The growth of Government over the years, and its present scale, may be pertinently contrasted with the early days of the welfare state. Lord Salter recalls* the intimacy with which top officials in the new welfare administration were involved in ensuring that it made sense outside Whitehall; the steps taken to explain the National Health Insurance Act 1912 to the numerous Friendly Societies through which it would be administered included one "rather ingenious device". This was to choose an ordinary mortal as the editor of all circulars

> "It was his task to read them at the last stage before actual issue, and to refer them back to the branch of the office which was responsible for the draft if there was anything not immediately intelligible to him. It

* Memoirs of a Public Servant, Faber & Faber, 1961, pp 36 & 67

was a severe, but salutary, test for the specialised official".

5. Too few forms now in circulation seem to have been submitted to a similar test.

What was the review about?

6. The review aimed at identifying burdens imposed by administrative forms and at recommending how they should be reduced. The review could not cover every single form in use, so the method adopted was to scrutinise a sample in eight departments; to examine the existing arrangements for controlling the cost of producing and using forms and for making them more effective; and to build on the good work already being done, for example, in HM Customs and Excise, the Department of Health and Social Security and the Inland Revenue.

7. The review therefore dealt with:

(1) Forms which go chiefly to individual citizens (examined by departmental teams in the Home Office Inland Revenue, Department of the Environment and Department of Health and Social Security).

(2) Forms which go chiefly to businesses (examined by departmental teams in HM Customs and Excise, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Department of Transport and the Department of Employment).

(3) Arrangements for controlling and managing forms in all main user departments (examined by a team in the then CSD, now the Management and Personnel Office).

8. The sample examined included 93 kinds of form. The teams recommended that 26 of these should be merged with others or withdrawn and 50 should be redesigned. The Central Office of

Information and HM Stationery Office produced some first-class redesigned forms.

9. I summarise the review's conclusions and recommendations as follows.

How many forms are there?

10. Hard facts are difficult to come by. Departmental teams could not find out how many forms their own departments had in use or even the usage rates for those forms they examined. It is therefore a matter of best estimates.

11. Before the review, the best estimate of the number of types of forms in use by government departments was 100,000. But the departmental teams have shown that their eight departments alone have at least that number themselves.

12. The central team's best estimate of the number of forms issued by the Government each year is very high - 2,000 million, or 36 for every man, woman and child in the country.

How do the costs and benefits of forms compare?

13. Here too the facts are in short supply.

14. The benefit of forms is easy to surmise. The review shows that certain forms can be abolished, but there is no doubt about the value of a good form. It allows information to be conveyed and obtained more accurately and concisely than could be done without it. This helps administration to work efficiently and fairly.

15. Forms require expenditure by both Government and the form-filler. The cost of forms to Government is plainly sizeable. If there are indeed 2,000 million forms in circulation each year, and if each costs only ten pence just to issue this alone would cost the Government £200 million. Forms are indeed big business.

16. Within Government, forms have a "production cost", for designing, printing, storing and distributing forms to their point of use. They also have a "cost in use", ie staff time spent in issuing the form and checking on its return that it had been correctly completed. For example, the MAFF report estimated that each capital grant form costs just 2.37 pence, whereas sending it out, checking it and following up queries costs £4.07.

17. The cost to the form-filler is especially intractable to calculate and I myself would not presume to value people's private time too nicely. Large firms can count the cost in cash terms fairly readily. For small firms and the individual, it may often be a case of "time means money" but more commonly perhaps of the exasperation and frustration that will follow on the heels of an initial distaste and reluctance combined with an inability to understand.

18. I would not claim too much for calculations in this area, but the DHSS team produced a most interesting illustration. They suggested that forms in use in their Department, which have an annual production cost of about £10 million, represent a true cost to the community of over £200 million a year. This means that an overall improvement of only one percent in the effectiveness of DHSS forms would save the community over £2 million a year.

19. In sum, bad forms cost money. Staff must spot wrongly completed forms and send them back. They must spend time dealing with queries where people do not understand. The form-filler also wastestime and money struggling to understand and complete the form.

Where do forms come from?

20. The law rarely specifies forms in detail. It is the policy and operational branches in departments which have the

main voice in whether a form should be produced, what its content should be and how the information it contains or the questions it asks should be presented.

21. Branches are anxious, naturally and rightly, that their Minister, their Department and they themselves should not be adversely criticised for failing to inform the public or business of their rights and responsibilities. But this tends to make self-protection one of the commonest characteristics of the Government form.

22. Some departments have recently put increasing effort into improving forms but forms design, and indeed forms work generally, remains a low status activity in most departments.

How do forms go wrong?

23. I believe that there is a mismatch between the good intentions of officials and the performance of their forms. Officials would be horrified to be thought careless or discourteous, but the teams' findings suggest that all too often forms do not put the form-filler first. The main points seem to be these:

(1) To a large degree, the way forms work in practice is taken by departments on trust. There is little "pilot testing" of new forms. Generally, forms are a tract of administration which is submerged from the view of Ministers and higher management.

(2) Many officials, particularly those in lower and middle management levels, see forms as unimportant or trivial. Some doubt whether it is right or necessary to communicate with the public in simple language. Work on forms design and improvement lacks prestige.

(3) The direct and indirect costs of forms are not considered when they are introduced.

(4) The language used in forms can be legalistics, lengthy and intimidating.

(5) Forms are too often hard to understand. Sometimes officials themselves do not understand the forms they send out or the procedural instructions associated with them. The computer may have a bad influence in this respect. And there are too few pointers to the form-filler of where he might get help.

(6) Error rates of over 30%, either by staff or the public, are common.

What should be done now?

24. The Government's general aim is that each department should have a policy for excellence in administration. The principal objectives of such a policy should include having as few forms and as successful forms as possible.

25. In practice, this means:

(1) Recognising that a form is only part of a piece of administration. It does not exist in its own right and should not be merged or controlled as though it did. But forms are both the face and voice of Government for many and they do deserve special attention.

(2) Seeing the policy for forms as part and parcel of the Government's wider policies for economica and effective administration, including the delegation of increased responsibility to line managers. Indeed, the forms policy will be progressively supported and assisted by other work already in hand, notably on the identification and control of running costs.

(3) Recognising that getting good forms is a practical job. It means, for example, policy and operational staff getting away from their desks and finding out what form-fillers make of the paper Government puts out. It calls for determination, knowledge and imagination by the senior management, line management and the Principal Establishment Officerin each department and, at the centre, from the Management and Personnel Office.

(4) In general terms, the most important thing is that the Permanent Secretary in each department lays on his policy and operational branches the responsibility for good administration, including forms, and that he checks regularly that his policy is in fact being implemented.

(5) In more specific terms, it includes:

(a) Looking first at the largest-issue forms or at the most heavily forms-based procedures of the department, since it may be impossible to do everything at once and it is wise to begin with forms and procedures of a substantial kind.

(b) Making branches responsible for forms also responsible for establishing and justifying the cost of new forms and appraising existing forms. The costs of forms to the form-filler should, equally, be assessed and justified wherever it is possible to do so.

(c) Calling for an annual report to the Permanent Secretary from the Principal Establishment Officer on the state of forms in the department. The PEO, on behalf of the Permanent Secretary, should arrange a progressive review of particular forms and procedures with line branches.

(d) Ensuring that, progressively, forms meet basic requirements of clarity, intelligibility and comprehensiveness. This is a responsibility to be shared between branches, design units in the department and others, notably the Central Office of Information and HM Stationery Office.

(e) Providing, according to the scale of the department, an official or team of officials to help the PEO and advise and encourage branches on forms control and design.

(6) The Management and Personnel Office should designate an officer as responsible for keeping up with the pressure for getting better, fewer forms; helping departments and encouraging them to learn from each other; and improving attitudes to forms through training.

Is that enough?

26. An occasional ruthlessness will be salutary. As a result of seeing for themselves, top managers should tear up some forms in the interest of better administration. But the main need will be for a steady and sustained determination to have as few forms as absolutely necessary and to make them excellent for their purpose. This will not be achieved over night. So

the example shown by Ministers and by top managers in getting the work going and in sticking at it will be critical to the success of the policy.

12 January 1982

STUDIES IN SELECTED DEPARTMENTS

This Annex summarises the work carried out by the eight departments who undertook studies as part of the review.

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE FISHERIES AND FOOD

The team studied two forms from the Agriculture and Horticulture Grant Scheme (the explanatory leaflet AHS 2 and claim form AHS 3) and one form from the Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances Scheme (the claim form HCA 9). In the district examined both claim forms had high error rates, 30% for the AHS 3 and 50% for the HCA 9.
Proposals for simplifying and redesigning the forms have been accepted by Ministers and the work is in hand. Savings to MAFF should be at least £20,000 and, for the farmer, a substantial reduction in the time spent doing paperwork.

HM CUSTOMS AND EXCISE

The team examined 37 kinds of form in three main areas: Customs imports, personal exports and tax-free car sales, and VAT. A range of recommendations was made for merging and simplifying the forms. In particular, shortening the main import form (C10) and the main return of VAT (VAT 100).
Some proposals are still being considered by Ministers, but they have accepted recommendations which will result in a saving of eight, or possibly ten, kinds of forms and will mean about 1.5 million fewer forms being issued each year. Savings to the department are estimated at £32,000 and, to businesses, at £2.5 million.

DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT

The team studied four forms associated with the Redundancy Payments Scheme (RP1, RP2, RPL4 and HR1). They made recommendations for combining the RP1 and RP2 and for changing the basis of calculating redundancy payments from a 52 week year to a calendar year. thus eliminating the need for the special calendar (RPL4). It is estimated that eliminating the RPL4 will save the department nearly £79,000 per annum, and employers about £180,000 per annum, in processing costs. In total, the recommendations will mean 175,000 fewer forms being issued each year.

The Secretary of State for Employment has accepted most of the recommendations in the report, including simplifying the basis for calculating redundancy payments. Ways of further simplifying the calculation are being pursued.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The Department commissioned outside consultants - Salford Forms Market (SFM) - to carry out a study aimed at simplifying a small number of forms. SFM recommended simplification of three forms used by the Rent Officer Service (the Application for Registration of Fair Rent-RRI-and two letters associated with it-RR2 and RR2S) and also suggested ways to improve a number of other DOE forms (in particular the Right to Buy Claim Form- RTB1 -and guidance notes). They proposed that improved redesigned forms should be tested and evaluated before introduction.

Consideration is now being given to the best way of taking the work forward.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY

The team looked at 16 forms and associated leaflets concerned with National Insurance. They made recommendations to simplify a number of forms including the Application for a National Insurance

Number (CFB), and the Contribution Statement and leaflet (RD20 and RD20A); to merge others, including forms CF9 and CF9A relating to contributions by women; and to overhaul the system for refunds. The proposals will result in 12 forms being redesigned and four being abolished, with estimated savings of £170,000 in printing costs, as well as the time of staff processing the forms. The public would also save time and money through having to deal with 3 million fewer forms. The team also made detailed recommendations for improving the control and quality of forms in DHSS.
The Secretary of State has accepted all the major recommendations in the report. A forms unit is being set up and a programme for reviewing all major DHSS forms put in hand.

HOME OFFICE

The team examined in depth 18 kinds of forms and leaflets concerned with Immigration, Nationality, Broadcasting and Criminal Injuries Compensation and looked in less detail at a range of others. Recommendations were made to reduce and simplify these forms, including the replacement of 8 standard letters on Immigration by a single application form and the reduction of the 15 Nationality application forms to 7 or 8.

The Home Secretary has accepted all the team's recommendations. This will mean [ ] fewer forms being issued each year, saving the Department some [£] per year. The draft of the new television licence is now being discussed with the Post Office, and the simplified Criminal Injuries Compensation forms with the CIC Board (who have proved very receptive to the suggested improvements).

INLAND REVENUE

The team studied the major tax return forms (P1 and 11P), the Notice of Assessment (P70) and forms used to claim tax refunds (R40 and R249). Recommendations were made to simplify all of the forms and the procedural arrangements for issuing assessments, and to strengthen the way in which forms are controlled in the Department. This work has continued the efforts in Inland Revenue to reduce the burden of tax forms on the public.

Ministers have accepted all of the recommendations and implementation is proceeding.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

The team looked at 7 types of forms used for goods vehicle operator licensing, and identified underlying complexities in the way the system was administered. They were not able to come to firm conclusions in the time available; but suggested ways in which the system might be simplified for both licensing authorities and operators. Ways of taking these ideas forward are being discussed with the Secretary of State for Transport.

Annex 3

REPORTS ON ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

Copies of Sir Derek Rayner's report on the review as a whole and the reports which were completed for Departmental Ministers, with a note of the decisions which have been taken, may be obtained from the addresses shown below. Prices include postage. Cheques should be made payable to the Department concerned.

Report	Price	Address
Sir Derek Rayner's report		MPO Library Old Admiralty Building Whitehall LONDON SW1A 2AZ
Management and Personnel Office report on Control Arrangements		As above
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food		Room 611, Victory House 30-34 Kingsway, LONDON WC2B 6TU
HM Customs & Excise		General Information Branch Room 024 King's Beam House Mark Lane LONDON EC3R 7HE
Department of Employment		Information 4 Caxton House Tothill Street LONDON SW1H 9NF
Department of the Environment		Building 6 DOE/DTp Sub Library Victoria Road South Ruislip Middlesex HA4 ONZ
Department of Transport		As above

Department of Health
and Social Security

Leaflet Unit,
PO Box 21
STANMORE
Middlesex HA7 1AY

Home Office

Inland Revenue

The Reference Library
Ground Floor
New Wing
Somerset House
LONDON WC2 1LB

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR DEREK RAYNER

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

The Prime Minister has now been able to consider your minute of 12 January 1982, together with the report of the review of administrative forms and the summary of the report, both of which you submitted with your minute. She has also seen the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's minute of 19 January.

The Prime Minister is of the view that the review was an excellent piece of work and she is very pleased with its results. She has also commended some of the general statements about good administration contained in the summary of the report, eg the first sentence of paragraph 24, paragraph 25(4) and the first two sentences of paragraph 26.

She has approved the three recommendations in your minute. I will accordingly be writing to the Private Secretaries to all Ministers in charge of departments on the lines of the draft attached to your minute, circulating both the summary of your conclusions and the report itself.

The Prime Minister agrees that we should publish our strategy for producing fewer and better forms as a White Paper and she is content for the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to circulate a draft to her Ministerial colleagues. She was glad to learn that there is now to be some relaxation in the time-table proposed in Lady Young's minute: she was concerned that to aim to publish the White Paper on 10 February would not give Ministers enough time to consider the draft White Paper fully. The Prime Minister has also remarked that a slightly slower time-table will give more time for the exhibition you have proposed - which she thinks is an excellent idea - to be mounted.

The Prime Minister agrees with you on the need to follow up the report of the review and she would therefore be grateful if, as you propose, the MPO could let her and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster have a report in a year's time on progress on the implementation of the review's recommendations and on the steps taken to promote the best practice.

I am sending copies of this minute to Mr Buckley (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office), Sir Robert Armstrong (Cabinet Office), Sir Douglas Wass (Treasury) and Mr Cassels (MPO).

FAW.

25 January 1982

File AH

ccs Cabinet
LA Dept.
A-G
CWO Lords
CWO Commons
Sir R Armstrong
Sir D Wass
Sir D Rayner
J. Cassels

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

25 January 1982

Dear John,

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

Sir Derek Rayner has submitted his report on the review of administrative forms which the Prime Minister asked him to undertake last January. I enclose a summary of his conclusions and a copy of the report. Eight departments, including the Home Office, took part in the review, and the Prime Minister is grateful to the Home Secretary and the other Ministers concerned for their co-operation.

The departmental teams looked at a small number of forms, aiming to show by example what can be achieved across the board. The results were good. Of the 93 forms examined, 26 kinds were recommended for abolition and 50 for redesign. This would mean nearly 5 million fewer forms being issued by government. The response of Ministers to the teams' recommendations has so far been vigorous, and the Prime Minister hopes that it will continue to be so. She believes that, across central government as a whole, we should now move on to making all forms in all departments as good as they can be.

Because our forms affect every family and business in the country, the Prime Minister has decided that we should publish our strategy for getting fewer and better forms as a White Paper. It would comprise Sir Derek Rayner's summary; a statement of what the Government intends to do; and a summary of the departmental exercises. Publication would be accompanied by an exhibition showing some of the very good work which departments are now doing.

The Prime Minister has invited the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to consult colleagues on the draft of a White Paper as soon as possible.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to all other Ministers in charge of Departments and to the Chief Whip. Copies also go but without enclosures to Sir Derek Rayner, the Joint Heads of the Civil Service and John Cassels.

Yours ever,

Clive Whitmore.

John Halliday Esq.,
Home Office.

AH

PRIME MINISTER

Excellent. I am delighted with it - and with some of the several statements about good administration.

Review of Administrative Forms

The attached folder contains Sir Derek Rayner's report on his review of administrative forms which you commissioned a year ago. He has submitted it under cover of a minute from himself (top enclosure) and a summary of the report: I suggest you read the summary, but do not spend time reading the full report.

Immediately below is a minute from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Flag A) commending the results of the review and endorsing Sir Derek Rayner's suggestion that the outcome of the review and an exposition of the Government's strategy for improving forms should be made public in a White Paper.

Are you content that:-

(a) Sir Derek Rayner's report should be circulated to all Ministers in charge of Departments? (I suggest that I should adapt the draft minute for you to send to Ministers to make it a letter from me to to Ministers' Private Secretaries: important though this subject is, I doubt that it warrants a personal minute from the Prime Minister.)

Yes ✓

(b) A White Paper should be published as proposed? Lady Young will circulate a draft to her colleagues. I must say that her suggestion that the White Paper should appear on 10 February seems to me rather too hasty, and risks not allowing Ministers sufficient time to comment. I suggest that, in replying to her minute on your behalf, I should say that while you would like to see the White Paper issue quickly, the timetable for its publication must give colleagues adequate time to consider it. Agree?

Yes pm

But it will just have to be moved

(c) The MPO should review Departments' progress on implementing the review's recommendations and report to you and Lady Young in a year's time?

Yes pm

22 January, 1982.

MT.

NBPM

Mr RICKETT

cc Mr Gaffin

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

You might like to have advance notice of the enclosed draft White Paper on administrative forms which we have received today from MPO. It has just been submitted to the Chancellor of the Duchy.

2. Subject to the views of the Prime Minister, the intention is that the Chancellor of the Duchy should circulate it to Ministers next week. It is as you will see based largely on the summary of Sir Derek Rayner's report to the Prime Minister.

Mrs E Thoms
22 January 1982

DRAFT WHITE PAPER (22.1.82)

PART I

ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS IN GOVERNMENT

The Government issues an estimated 2,000 million forms and leaflets each year. That is 36 for every man, woman and child in the country. The price to the taxpayer is not known, but if each form costs 10 pence in all it would be in the region of £200 million. There is also a cost to the citizen as form filler. Even good forms impose some burdens on the public. Bad forms make for worse problems and extra costs.

What is an administrative form?

2. Government forms touch on the finances and life of every family and business in the country. Their purposes include informing the public about their rights, enabling a business to discharge its legal responsibilities or making assessments for taxation, pensions or grants. Forms are more convenient than letters, phone calls or meetings for many purposes. They are the main means by which the Government and the citizen talk to each other over an immense range of business. For example, most households will deal each year with forms covering Income Tax, Social Security benefits of one kind or another, and the renewal of the TV License and Vehicle Excise Duty. Most businesses will send in returns on VAT, National Insurance Contributions and Sickness Benefits. And many forms are supported by accompanying guides and leaflets.

Review of Forms

3. Some Departments have done useful work to make some of their forms and pamphlets more intelligible, accurate and economical. There are notable examples of marked improvements in certain important forms. There is a major reduction in the burden of statistical forms on businesses resulting from implementation of the 1980 Review of the Government's Statistical Services (Cmnd 8236). But, as part of its wider policies for pursuing good management and efficiency in its own administration, the Government decided that a more comprehensive and critical appraisal of administrative forms was needed, building on what had already been done. This

review has been larger, more thorough and more far reaching than any previously undertaken. It was conducted entirely by civil servants, drawn from the eight Departments participating in the review and from the Management and Personnel Office. It was co-ordinated by Sir Derek Rayner.

Results of the Review

4. Part II of this White Paper contains a summary by Sir Derek Rayner of how the review was undertaken and of its results. Part III contains summaries of the individual Departmental studies within the review. A full list of the Reports, with the sources from which they are available, is at Annex 1.

5. The review will result in the redesign of more than half the forms examined and the withdrawal of over a quarter, which will result in five million fewer forms being issues annually.

6. The review, ~~however~~, was able to look in detail at only a very small selection of Government forms. But, on the basis of this examination, it has shown very clearly what needs to be done if there is to be a successful and sustained drive to simplify and reduce forms.

The Government's Strategy

7. The Government's general aims are to improve the efficiency of the Civil Service, to eliminate waste and to promote methods of administration which gives the best possible value to the taxpayer (White Paper on Efficiency in the Civil Service : Cmnd 8293). The proper control and use of forms is a vital part of this since good forms are an integral part of good administration. The Government therefore proposes that there should now be a continuous programme of action to this end. The objective is to reduce the number of forms, wherever possible and to simplify those that remain.

8. In practice this means that, first, the policy on forms must be part and parcel of the Government's wider programme for good management in the Civil Service, including giving increased respon-

sibility to individual managers. Indeed, the policy on forms will be progressively supported and assisted by other work already in hand, notably the streamlining and simplification of administrative processes through departmental scrutinies, Service-wide reviews and other efficiency studies.

9. Secondly, it means recognising that a form is only part of a piece of administration and does not exist in its own right. It should not be managed or controlled as though it did. But, because forms are both the face and voice of Government for many people, they deserve special attention.

10. It also means recognising that getting good forms is a practical and time-consuming job. For example, staff in policy and operational branches should get away from their desks and find out what people make of the forms for which they are responsible. This calls for determination, knowledge and commitment from top management, line management and the Principal Establishment Officer in each Department and, at the centre, from the MPO.

11. Finally, it requires the Minister and Permanent Secretary in each Department to lay on their policy and operational branches the responsibility for good administration, including good forms; to provide them with central supporting services (for example, form designers); and, crucially, to check regularly that their policy is being implemented in practice.

Action

12. The great majority of the specific recommendations in the individual Departmental studies have been accepted by the responsible Ministers and action is under way (see Part III). In particular the Departments concerned are getting on with the withdrawal or redesign of forms in accordance with the decisions of Ministers on the study reports.

13. Beyond this immediate action, each Department will now set up a continuing programme to improve and review its forms, including their management and control. The main elements of this will be :

(a) In the case of existing forms, requiring the responsible branches to review systematically the need for and cost effectiveness of the forms concerned, including wherever possible an assessment of their cost to those who fill them in. Since it will not be possible to cover all areas immediately, a staged approach will be necessary, beginning with those forms or form based procedures which are most extensive in the Department.

(b) In the case of new forms, requiring originating branches to justify their need and cost effectiveness, again including, wherever possible, the costs to those who will fill them in.

(c) Providing, according to the scale of the department, and from within existing staff numbers, an official or team of officials to act as a formsunit, advising and encouraging policy and operational branches on form control, design and review : over time, increasing the number in units with relevant professional qualifications and skills.

(d) ~~Building on existing provision,~~ Developing and extending the existing provision, appropriate training both for those in forms units and line management.

(e) Ensuring that, progressively, forms are suitable for their purpose and are made much clearer and more intelligible. In particular, efforts will be made to keep the language plain and simple, so far as possible avoiding jargon and technical expressions. Redesigned forms will be tested before they are introduced to check that they can be easily understood and used by the public. This is a responsibility to be shared between branches, the forms unit in the Department, and others, notably COI and HMSO.

(f) An annual report to the Permanent Secretary from the Principal Establishment Officer on the state of forms in the Department, including the results of the reviews

mentioned above. Wherever possible, this should be part of existing reporting systems to top management.

14. Too often in the past efforts to make improvements in forms have not been sustained. It is vital therefore that Departments keep up the momentum which these measures will establish. The MPO has an important part to play in assisting Departments to do so. They have ~~will~~ designated one of its officials with a special responsibility in this area. He will keep in touch with the work that Departments will do under their own hand; see that problems which are identified are not allowed to slow down the programme; promote the exchange of ideas and experience, both within the Civil Service and between it and those with ~~other~~ outside experience; arrange such central training as is needed with the Civil College; and see that good practice is made widely known. After a year, the MPO will report progress with the implementation of the Government's decisions to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

15. The action outlined in this White Paper will not be achieved overnight. It will take time. Completing it will call for a steady and sustained drive from the top of Departments downwards. For its part, the Government is determined to maintain its commitment to getting fewer and better forms and to secure the lasting benefits which this review promises.

SUMMARY OF REPORTS ON THE REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

What is an "administrative form"

1. An administrative form is a means by which the citizen or the firm on the one hand and the Government on the other talk to each other over an immensely wide range of business. For example, a household will deal in the course of a year with forms like the Income Tax Return and the renewal of the TV Licence and Vehicle Excise Duty on a car.

2. An administrative form is not about statistics, therefore. It is usually a part of a scheme of administration, as various as collecting taxes or awarding grants. It is a mechanism which connect the Government and the citizen or the firm.

3. The Government form is a common feature of modern life. Some that I have seen are an admirable practical expression of a democratic Government's wish and duty to serve and inform the citizen well. Others, less praiseworthy, seem to be the practical expressions of a remote officialdom. All are a sign of the vastness of central government administration.

4. The growth of Government over the years, and its present scale, may be pertinently contrasted with the early days of the welfare state. Lord Salter recalls* the intimacy with which top officials in the new welfare administration were involved in ensuring that it made sense outside Whitehall; the steps taken to explain the National Health Insurance Act 1912 to the numerous Friendly Societies through which it would be administered included one "rather ingenious device". This was to choose an ordinary mortal as the editor of all circulars

> "It was his task to read them at the last stage before actual issue, and to refer them back to the branch of the office which was responsible for the draft if there was anything not immediately intelligible to him. It

* Memoirs of a Public Servant, Faber & Faber, 1961, pp 36 & 67

was a severe, but salutary, test for the specialised official".

5. Too few forms now in circulation seem to have been submitted to a similar test.

What was the review about?

6. The review aimed at identifying burdens imposed by administrative forms and at recommending how they should be reduced. The review could not cover every single form in use, so the method adopted was to scrutinise a sample in eight departments; to examine the existing arrangements for controlling the cost of producing and using forms and for making them more effective; and to build on the good work already being done, for example, in HM Customs and Excise, the Department of Health and Social Security and the Inland Revenue.

7. The review therefore dealt with:

(1) Forms which go chiefly to individual citizens (examined by departmental teams in the Home Office Inland Revenue, Department of the Environment and Department of Health and Social Security).

(2) Forms which go chiefly to businesses (examined by departmental teams in HM Customs and Excise, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Department of Transport and the Department of Employment).

(3) Arrangements for controlling and managing forms in all main user departments (examined by a team in the then CSD, now the Management and Personnel Office).

8. The sample examined included 93 kinds of form. The teams recommended that 26 of these should be merged with others or withdrawn and 50 should be redesigned. The Central Office of

Information and HM Stationery Office produced some first-class redesigned forms.

9. I summarise the review's conclusions and recommendations as follows.

How many forms are there?

10. Hard facts are difficult to come by. Departmental teams could not find out how many forms their own departments had in use or even the usage rates for those forms they examined. It is therefore a matter of best estimates.

11. Before the review, the best estimate of the number of types of forms in use by government departments was 100,000. But the departmental teams have shown that their eight departments alone have at least that number themselves.

12. The central team's best estimate of the number of forms issued by the Government each year is very high - 2,000 million, or 36 for every man, woman and child in the country.

How do the costs and benefits of forms compare?

13. Here too the facts are in short supply.

14. The benefit of forms is easy to surmise. The review shows that certain forms can be abolished, but there is no doubt about the value of a good form. It allows information to be conveyed and obtained more accurately and concisely than could be done without it. This helps administration to work efficiently and fairly.

15. Forms require expenditure by both Government and the form-filler. The cost of forms to Government is plainly sizeable. If there are indeed 2,000 million forms in circulation each year, and if each costs only ten pence just to issue this alone would cost the Government £200 million. Forms are indeed big business.

16. Within Government, forms have a "production cost", for designing, printing, storing and distributing forms to their point of use. They also have a "cost in use", ie staff time spent in issuing the form and checking on its return that it had been correctly completed. For example, the MAFF report estimated that each capital grant form costs just 2.37 pence, whereas sending it out, checking it and following up queries costs £4.07.

17. The cost to the form-filler is especially intractable to calculate and I myself would not presume to value people's private time too nicely. Large firms can count the cost in cash terms fairly readily. For small firms and the individual, it may often be a case of "time means money" but more commonly perhaps of the exasperation and frustration that will follow on the heels of an initial distaste and reluctance combined with an inability to understand.

18. I would not claim too much for calculations in this area, but the DHSS team produced a most interesting illustration. They suggested that forms in use in their Department, which have an annual production cost of about £10 million, represent a true cost to the community of over £200 million a year. This means that an overall improvement of only one percent in the effectiveness of DHSS forms would save the community over £2 million a year.

19. In sum, bad forms cost money. Staff must spot wrongly completed forms and send them back. They must spend time dealing with queries where people do not understand. The form-filler also wastestime and money struggling to understand and complete the form.

Where do forms come from?

20. The law rarely specifies forms in detail. It is the policy and operational branches in departments which have the

main voice in whether a form should be produced, what its content should be and how the information it contains or the questions it asks should be presented.

21. Branches are anxious, naturally and rightly, that their Minister, their Department and they themselves should not be adversely criticised for failing to inform the public or business of their rights and responsibilities. But this tends to make self-protection one of the commonest characteristics of the Government form.

22. Some departments have recently put increasing effort into improving forms but forms design, and indeed forms work generally, remains a low status activity in most departments.

How do forms go wrong?

23. I believe that there is a mismatch between the good intentions of officials and the performance of their forms. Officials would be horrified to be thought careless or discourteous, but the teams' findings suggest that all too often forms do not put the form-filler first. The main points seem to be these:

(1) To a large degree, the way forms work in practice is taken by departments on trust. There is little "pilot testing" of new forms. Generally, forms are a tract of administration which is submerged from the view of Ministers and higher management.

(2) Many officials, particularly those in lower and middle management levels, see forms as unimportant or trivial. Some doubt whether it is right or necessary to communicate with the public in simple language. Work on forms design and improvement lacks prestige.

(3) The direct and indirect costs of forms are not considered when they are introduced.

(4) The language used in forms can be legalistics, lengthy and intimidating.

(5) Forms are too often hard to understand. Sometimes officials themselves do not understand the forms they send out or the procedural instructions associated with them. The computer may have a bad influence in this respect. And there are too few pointers to the form-filler of where he might get help.

(6) Error rates of over 30%, either by staff or the public, are common.

What should be done now?

24. The Government's general aim is that each department should have a policy for excellence in administration. The principal objectives of such a policy should include having as few forms and as successful forms as possible.

25. In practice, this means:

(1) Recognising that a form is only part of a piece of administration. It does not exist in its own right and should not be merged or controlled as though it did. But forms are both the face and voice of Government for many and they do deserve special attention.

(2) Seeing the policy for forms as part and parcel of the Government's wider policies for economica and effective administration, including the delegation of increased responsibility to line managers. Indeed, the forms policy will be progressively supported and assistedby other work already in hand, notably on the identification and control of running costs.

(3) Recognising that getting good forms is a practical job. It means, for example, policy and operational staff getting away from their desks and finding out what form-fillers make of the paper Government puts out. It calls for determination, knowledge and imagination by the senior management, line management and the Principal Establishment Officerin each department and, at the centre, from the Management and Personnel Office.

(4) In general terms, the most important thing is that the Permanent Secretary in each department lays on his policy and operational branches the responsibility for good administration, including forms, and that he checks regularly that his policy is in fact being implemented.

(5) In more specific terms, it includes:

(a) Looking first at the largest-issue forms or at the most heavily forms-based procedures of the department, since it may be impossible to do everything at once and it is wise to begin with forms and procedures of a substantial kind.

(b) Making branches responsible for forms also responsible for establishing and justifying the cost of new forms and appraising existing forms. The costs of forms to the form-filler should, equally, be assessed and justified wherever it is possible to do so.

(c) Calling for an annual report to the Permanent Secretary from the Principal Establishment Officer on the state of forms in the department. The PEO, on behalf of the Permanent Secretary, should arrange a progressive review of particular forms and procedures with line branches.

(d) Ensuring that, progressively, forms meet basic requirements of clarity, intelligibility and comprehensiveness. This is a responsibility to be shared between branches, design units in the department and others, notably the Central Office of Information and HM Stationery Office.

(e) Providing, according to the scale of the department, an official or team of officials to help the PEO and advise and encourage branches on forms control and design.

(6) The Management and Personnel Office should designate an officer as responsible for keeping up with the pressure for getting better, fewer forms; helping departments and encouraging them to learn from each other; and improving attitudes to forms through training.

Is that enough?

26. An occasional ruthlessness will be salutary. As a result of seeing for themselves, top managers should tear up some forms in the interest of better administration. But the main need will be for a steady and sustained determination to h as few forms as absolutely necessary and to make them excellen for their purpose. This will not be achieved over night. So

the example shown by Ministers and by top managers in getting the work going and in sticking at it will be critical to the success of the policy.

DEREK RAYNER

12 January 1982

STUDIES IN SELECTED DEPARTMENTS

This part of the White Paper summarises the work carried out by the eight departments who undertook studies as part of the review

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE FISHERIES AND FOOD

Forms from two areas of departmental work were studied by the team:

a. Agriculture and Horticulture Grant Scheme - the explanatory leaflet (AHS 2) and claim form (AHS 3). Error rate of 30% were found on claims received at one regional office. Re-designed forms to aid intelligibility were redrafted by HMSO.

b. Hill Livestock Compensatory Scheme - the claim form (HCA 9) was found to have an error rate of 50%. The team made alternative recommendations for either simplifying the form or using instead, information collected in an annual census.

Ministers have accepted the need to reduce error rates on these forms and work is in hand to do this. It will build on the recommendations in the report. The study identified savings to MAFF of at least £20,000 and, for the farmer a substantial reduction in the time spent doing paperwork.

HM CUSTOMS AND EXCISE

In all, the team examined 37 forms from the following areas:

a. Customs imports - froms CIO/CIOA, CIOX, C91, C. 5A, C109A, C130, C513, C578, C1204 and the C15. The team recommended extensive changes to the forms including shortening the main import form, C10. Because this form is a base for the rest of the 'family', improvements will result for the others as well. Redrafts of some forms were produced. If implemented, it is estimated that the recommendations would save the department £30,000 per annum and businesses £1m-£1.5m per annum.

b. <u>personal exports and tax-free car sales schemes</u> - forms VAT 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 417. The team recommended merging the two schemes for the tax-free export of cars (forms VAT 410 and 411) and simplifying and merging forms VAT 412 and 415.

c. VAT Forms - the team recommended that only one VAT assessment letter should be used to replace forms VAT 151R, VAT 152R, VAT 152(A)R; that two notices of assessment (VAT 189 and VAT 191) should be merged; that the main return of tax, (VAT 100) should be shortened and simplified; and that 3 certificates of posting forms (VAT 442, VAT 443, VAT 445) should be abolished.

d. other forms - the team also recommended that a betting duty form (BD106) should be abolished and the CAP export levy schedule (C1226) should be simplified and possibly merged with other forms.

Ministers have rejected the recommendation for merging the three VAT assessment letters and are considering further, the merger of forms VAT 189 and VAT 191/2 and the merger of forms VAT 410 and VAT 411. The adoption of a common period of tax free use for cars of 12 months has also been rejected. The recommendations which have been agreed will result in a saving of eight kinds of forms with a possible two further savings, and will mean about 1.5 million fewer forms being issued each year. Savings to the department are estimated at £32,000 and for businesses, £2.5 million.

DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT

The team studied three forms associated with the Redundancy Payments Scheme (RP1, RP2 and RPL4) and the Notification of Proposed Redundancies (HRI). They made recommendations for combining the RP1 and RP2 which would result in 150,000 fewer forms being issued, completed and processed each year. In addition, they proposed that the basis of calculating redundancy payments should be changed from a 52 week year to a calendar year, thus eliminating the need for the special calendar (RPL4). It was estimated that this would save the department nearly £79,000 per annum, and employees about £180,000 per annum in processing costs. It would also mean 25,000 fewer forms being issued each year. The report shows clearly that attempts to achieve consistency and equity can often produce complicated procedures and complicated forms. It recommends that in the future, greater attention should be paid to the operational implications when legislation is being drafted.

The Secretary of State for Employment has accepted most of the recommendation in the report including simplifying the basis for calculating redundancy payments. Ways of further simplifying the calculation are being pursued.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The department commissioned outside consultants - Salford Forms Market (SFM) - to carry out a study aimed at simplifying a small number of forms. SFM chose three forms used by the Rent Officer Service - the Application for Registration of Fair Rent (RRI) and two letters associated with it (RR2 and RR2S). They recommended that all three should be simplified and they produced re-designed forms. They also looked briefly at a number of other DOE forms (in particular the Right to Buy Claim Form (RTB1) and guidance notes) and identified ways in which they could be improved. The report produced by the SFM suggested that it would not be appropriate to issue the redesigned rent assessment forms as they stand. In particular it would be necessary to test and evaluate the designs. Consideration is now being given to the best way of taking the work forward.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY

The team chose to look at social security forms:

a. Application for a National Insurance (NI) Number - recommendations were made to simplify one form (CF8) and abolish another (CF8A for people under 18)

b. NI contribution rates for women - here, the recommendation was that two forms - one for widows and one for wives (CF9A and CF9) - should be simplified and merged and that the new form should, in addition, serve as a NI application. This would result in 50,000 fewer CF8s being issued each year

c. NI Contribution Statement and Leaflet - the team recommended that the RD20 and RD20A should be simplified and should not be issued automatically. This would save 1.75 million forms a year

d. NI Contributions Direct Debit Form (CF351) - this form was found to have a 33 per cent error rate. A recommendatio was made for a standard format in line with Bank of England guidance

e. Contribution Deferrment Forms - the team recommended that procedures should be changed to allow deferment to be granted for three years rather than one. This would reduce the number of forms (CF359 and CF379) and leaflets (NP18 and NP28) issued and processed by up to two thirds. Wasteful over-production of forms and leaftlets of about half a million copies per annum was also identified

f. Contribution Refund Forms - the team examined forms CF28E, CF28F, CF28(NP) (for refunds dealt with by local offices) and forms in the RD505 series (for refunds from DHSS Newcastle). It was found that the forms had

design faults, contained too much jargon and overlapped each other. Recommendations were made for a thorough overhaul linked to procedural improvements.

In all 16 forms (some with associated leaflets) and 1 standard letter were examined. The team proposed that 12 should be redesigned and 4 abolished. If the recommendations are implemented the department would save an estimated £170,000 in printing costs, as well as the time of staff processing the forms. The public would also save time through having to complete less forms. In all, 3 million fewer forms will be issued each year. The team also made detailed recommendations for improving the control and quality of forms in DHSS. They proposed a two year review of major forms followed by a programme for improving forms as they are reprinted. Research commissioned during the review from Social and Community Planning Research explored public attitudes to DHSS forms and showed that the public generally found them hard to understand. The report looks at why forms go wrong and makes proposals for putting the problems right. The Secretary of State has accepted all the major recommendations in the report. A forms unit is being set up and a programme for reviewing all major DHSS forms put in hand.

HOME OFFICE

A wide range of forms in five separate areas were studied:

a. Immigration - with the help of the Immigration Department, the team examined 8 standard letters and recommended that they should be replaced by a single

application form. They also proposed that a guide explaining the rules should be issued instead of individual letters about particular queries.

b. Nationality - the 15 application forms were examined and recommendations were made to reduce this to 7 or 8.

c. Broadcasting - the team recommended shortening and simplifying the wording of the TV licence.

d. Criminal Injuries Compensation - with the help of COI, the team made proposals for simplifying the application form and explanatory leaflet.

e. Probation Sponsorship - proposals were made to reduce the 40 forms in this area to less than 20.

In all, the team examined in depth, 18 forms and leaflets. If accepted their proposals would result in about 8 fewer kinds of form and 10 redesigned forms.

An important theme from this study is that forms which contain legal jargon are likely to confuse, rather than protect the rights of the applicant and can result in extra costs to the department from wrongly completed forms. The Home Secretary has accepted all the team's recommendations. The new draft of the television licence is now being discussed with the Post Office and the new Criminal Injuries Compensation forms with the CIC Board (who have proved very receptive to the suggested improvements).

INLAND REVENUE

The following forms were studied:

a. The Tax Return (P1) - recommendations were made to shorten the form and make it easier to understand.

b. The Tax Return (11P) - for people with more complex tax affairs - again, recommendations were made to cut back the information requested, partly by using other Revenue sources.

c. Forms R40 and R249 (for claiming refunds where allowances exceed income) - the team questioned whether all the questions were necessary and recommended improvements.

d. Notice of Assessment (P70) - the team put forward a new design of this form prepared by the University of Reading. They also proposed procedural improvements which would cut down the number of P70s issued.

The team also looked at the way in which forms are controlled in the department and made recommendations to strengthen the procedures. All of the recommendations have been accepted and are being implemented.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

The team looked at 7 types of forms used for goods vehicle operator licensing, and identified underlying complexities in

the way the system was administered. They were not able to come to firm conclusions in the time available but suggested ways in which the system might be simplified for both licensing authorities and operators. Ways of taking these ideas forward are being discussed with the Secretary of State for Transport.

Annex 1

REPORTS ON ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

Copies of Sir Derek Rayner's report on the review as a whole and the reports which were completed for Departmental Ministers, with a note of the decisions which have been taken, may be obtained from the addresses shown below. Prices include postage. Cheques should be made payable to the Department concerned.

Report	Price	Address
Sir Derek Rayner's report to the Prime Minister	[£]	MPO Library Old Admiralty Building Whitehall LONDON SW1A 2HH
Management and Personnel Office report on Control Arrangements	[£]	As above.
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	£	
HM Customs & Excise	[£ 2c]	General Information Branch Room 024 King's Beam House Mark Lane LONDON EC3R 7HE
Department of Employment	£	
Departments of the Environment	£	
Department of Transport	£	
Department of Health and Social Security	£	
Home Office	£	
Inland Revenue	£ 3	The Reference Library Ground Floor New Wing Somerset House LONDON WC2 1LB

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr PATTISON

No further action needed.

AJL

25.i.82.

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

We spoke last evening, when you told me that the Prime Minister would probably see Sir Derek Rayner's submission of 12 January next weekend and that you thought she would accept the idea of a White Paper to set out the Government's "forms strategy".

with MAP

2. MPO have a White Paper in draft, not yet seen by me but said to be based largely on Sir DR's summary report. They would like it if the Prime Minister minuted her colleagues, as suggested by Sir DR, very early next week so that the CDL could follow-up in mid-week with a letter to Ministers inviting endorsement for a draft White Paper. The MPO plan would then be to

(1) publish the White Paper on Wednesday 10 February;

(2) soften up selected journalists in the press, radio and TV beforehand;

(3) give radio and TV in particular the opportunity to record and film interviews, with illustrative forms (good, bad, old, new); and

(4) launch the White Paper at a press conference held at the exhibition of forms mentioned by the CDL in her minute of yesterday to the Prime Minister.

3. I do not feel completely happy about the timetable. Ministers should be allowed at least a week to respond to the draft. And the press are a cynical lot. I think that the White Paper, the exhibition and the press conference require a lot of thought and preparation, including a "devil's advocate" session at which the CDL can rehearse her response to questions.

I believe that it would be wise to allow another week and not go for publication before Wednesday 17 February.

4. The CDL is keen that publication of the "forms" White Paper should not bump up against publication of the intended "action document" for MPO, also scheduled for February, but I see the White Paper as having more popular appeal than the "action document" and publicity for it as needing a very thorough and painstaking preparation.

5. With this in mind I suggest the attached draft reply to Mr Buckley. Two logistical points on this. First, the Minute referred to in the reply is that attached in draft to Sir Derek Rayner's submission of 12 January. Secondly, if you let Mrs Thoms (233 8550) know that you agree, she will have sufficient copies of the papers attached to Sir DR's submission prepared here in readiness for circulation with the PM's Minute to Ministers.

6. You may like to know that, at our suggestion, the CDL will probably be putting in a special effort - part thanks, part propitiation - with the National Consumer Council and the Salford Forms Market, who have helped in the review, and with the national body for Citizen's Advice Bureaux.

7. I am copying this to Sir Robert Armstrong and Mr Gaffin only.

CP

C PRIESTLEY
20 January 1982

Enc: Draft letter to Mr Buckley, MPO

DRAFT OF 20 JANUARY 1982

J Buckley Esq
Private Secretary to the
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

The Prime Minister has seen the Chancellor of the Duchy's minute of 19 January, together with Sir Derek Rayner's submission of 12 January.

The Prime Minister is content to go ahead on the basis recommended and I enclose a copy of the Minute she has now sent to Ministers covering Sir Derek Rayner's summary and full reports. Mrs Thatcher is also content that Lady Young should circulate a draft White Paper for Ministers' endorsement.

The Prime Minister thinks that Ministers should be given a reasonable period, not less than a week, in which to comment on the draft and that, this being so, the date proposed for publication (Wednesday 10 February) may be a little early. It might be more convenient, and allow rather longer for preparation, if a slightly later date (say Wednesday 17 February) were chosen.

I am copying this to Lizzie Thoms and David Wright (Cabinet Office) and Jeremy Colman (HM Treasury).

M A Pattison/W F S Rickett

A

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

PRIME MINISTER

MT.

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

I am writing to confirm my support for the recommendations set out in Derek Rayner's minute to you of 12 January.

In particular, I agree that the results of the review and the Government's strategy for improving forms should be set out in a White Paper. This will enable us to put this review in the context of our developing policies for good management and economical administration in the Civil Service, and would usefully supplement the earlier White Papers on Statistical Services and on Efficiency. Subject to your views, therefore, I will circulate a draft for the agreement of our colleagues.

On timing, I think we should aim to publish the White Paper as soon as we can. At the moment 10 February seems the earliest sensible target date.

I hope we can attract widespread and favourable publicity for the White Paper. As Sir Derek Rayner has said, this means preparing the ground carefully with the media. Apart from a Press Conference on the day of publication, therefore, we intend to mount an exhibition on forms with the help of the Central Office of Information. We are aiming to have this ready a few days before publication so that, as part of their background briefing, selected representatives of the media can be given a preview.

I am copying this minute to Derek Rayner, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Douglas Wass.

Peter Young

BARONESS YOUNG

19 January 1982

PRIME MINISTER

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

1. I submit herewith my report on the Review of Administrative Forms which you commissioned last January. The report is quite short, but you may find it helpful to look first at the separate summary which immediately follows this minute.

2. The review consisted of

- 8 scrutinies in departments; and
- the examination by a central team of the arrangements for managing and controlling forms.

3. I propose the following action to carry the review through to a conclusion. Lady Young has seen the papers and has asked me to say that she is "generally content... in particular with the role proposed for MPO [para. 9 below] and with the idea of publishing a White Paper [para. 7 below]."

Informing Ministers

4. Forms are a way of doing work. They are usually part of a bigger process; they rarely stand on their own. Typically, they bring information from the citizen or the firm to the desk of an official which he or she needs in order to assess them for taxation, pension or grant.

5. This review has tried to show, by example, what can be done to increase the intelligibility, accuracy and economy of forms and to reduce their number.

Recn. 1

6. All departments use forms but only eight took part in the review. Therefore, I recommend that you circulate the report to all Ministers in charge of departments. This would provide the opportunity for you to encourage the Ministers who took part to get ahead with implementing the recommendations made to them where they had not yet done so and to ask all Ministers to take part in the drive for fewer and better forms. I attach a draft minute which you (or Mr Whitmore on your behalf) might send to them with a copy of the summary.

Informing Parliament and the Public

Recn. 2

7. The picture painted by the review of control over and the fitness of forms for their purpose is not all that rosy but there are some good stories: notably DHSS and the Revenue Departments are doing some fine work. The report suggests (paras. 49 - 86) a strategy for making the good form the rule rather than the exception. The strategy is summarised in para. 25 of the summary. I recommend that this strategy should be set out in a White Paper. You will no doubt want to look to Lady Young for advice on the content and timing of the White Paper, but my own initial view is that it might sensibly consist of the attached summary; a statement of what the Government is going to do; and, perhaps as an annex, a note on the results of the Departmental reviews.

8. A White Paper on forms would of course get a lot of publicity. If the press were well-briefed beforehand, I think much of this could and should be to the Government's advantage. Here, too, you will want to look to Lady Young and Ministerial colleagues for advice. One thought you and they might like to consider is that publication should be accompanied by an exhibition, rather like the one you had in No 10 this time last year, showing practical examples of how forms can be made better in a way that can be well photographed

Keeping up the pressure

Recn. 3

9. Getting better and fewer forms calls for a new approach to working methods rather than the control of something which if finite and measurable in its own right. I recommend that the Management and Personnel Office should help departments to implement the review's recommendations and also promote best practice. You might wish to call on MPO to report to you and Lady Young on progress in about a year.

Acknowledgements

10. I gladly acknowledge the work done by the central team from MPO (Mr M H Grant, Miss M Exley, Mr T L Lonsdale and Mr I F Goddard) and by Mrs E Thoms in my own office in co-ordinating the review on my behalf and developing guidelines for controlling and managing forms in departments.

11. I am also grateful to Ministers and their senior officials for their co-operation and to the members of the departmental teams.

12. I am copying this to Lady Young, Sir Robert Armstrong, Sir Douglas Wass and Mr John Cassels.

Derek Rayner

12 January 1982

Encs: Summary of reports on the review of Administrative Forms
Review of Administrative Forms: Report by Sir Derek Rayner

SUMMARY OF REPORTS ON THE REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

What is an "administrative form"

1. An administrative form is a means by which the citizen or the firm on the one hand and the Government on the other talk to each other over an immensely wide range of business. For example, a household will deal in the course of a year with forms like the Income Tax Return and the renewal of the TV Licence and Vehicle Excise Duty on a car.

2. An administrative form is not about statistics, therefore. It is usually a part of a scheme of administration, as various as collecting taxes or awarding grants. It is a mechanism which connect the Government and the citizen or the firm.

3. The Government form is a common feature of modern life. Some that I have seen are an admirable practical expression of a democratic Government's wish and duty to serve and inform the citizen well. Others, less praiseworthy, seem to be the practical expressions of a remote officialdom. All are a sign of the vastness of central government administration.

4. The growth of Government over the years, and its present scale, may be pertinently contrasted with the early days of the welfare state. Lord Salter recalls* the intimacy with which top officials in the new welfare administration were involved in ensuring that it made sense outside Whitehall; the steps taken to explain the National Health Insurance Act 1912 to the numerous Friendly Societies through which it would be administered included one "rather ingenious device". This was to choose an ordinary mortal as the editor of all circulars:

> "It was his task to read them at the last stage before actual issue, and to refer them back to the branch of the office which was responsible for the draft if there was anything not immediately intelligible to him. It

* Memoirs of a Public Servant, Faber & Faber, 1961, pp 36 & 67

was a severe, but salutary, test for the specialised official".

5. Too few forms now in circulation seem to have been submitted to a similar test. !

What was the review about?

6. The review aimed at identifying burdens imposed by administrative forms and at recommending how they should be reduced. The review could not cover every single form in use, so the method adopted was to scrutinise a sample in eight departments; to examine the existing arrangements for controlling the cost of producing and using forms and for making them more effective; and to build on the good work already being done, for example, in HM Customs and Excise, the Department of Health and Social Security and the Inland Revenue.

7. The review therefore dealt with:

(1) Forms which go chiefly to individual citizens (examined by departmental teams in the Home Office, Inland Revenue, Department of the Environment and Department of Health and Social Security).

(2) Forms which go chiefly to businesses (examined by departmental teams in HM Customs and Excise, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Department of Transport and the Department of Employment).

(3) Arrangements for controlling and managing forms in all main user departments (examined by a team in the then CSD, now the Management and Personnel Office).

8. The sample examined included 93 kinds of form. The teams recommended that 26 of these should be merged with others or withdrawn and 50 should be redesigned. The Central Office of

Information and HM Stationery Office produced some first-class redesigned forms.

9. I summarise the review's conclusions and recommendations as follows.

How many forms are there?

10. Hard facts are difficult to come by. Departmental teams could not find out how many forms their own departments had in use or even the usage rates for those forms they examined. It is therefore a matter of best estimates.

11. Before the review, the best estimate of the number of types of forms in use by government departments was 100,000. But the departmental teams have shown that their eight departments alone have at least that number themselves.

12. The central team's best estimate of the number of forms issued by the Government each year is very high - 2,000 million, or 36 for every man, woman and child in the country.

How do the costs and benefits of forms compare?

13. Here too the facts are in short supply.

14. The benefit of forms is easy to surmise. The review shows that certain forms can be abolished, but there is no doubt about the value of a good form. It allows information to be conveyed and obtained more accurately and concisely than could be done without it. This helps administration to work efficiently and fairly.

15. Forms require expenditure by both Government and the form-filler. The cost of forms to Government is plainly sizeable. If there are indeed 2,000 million forms in circulation each year, and if each costs only ten pence just to issue this alone would cost the Government £200 million. Forms are indeed big business.

16. Within Government, forms have a "production cost", for designing, printing, storing and distributing forms to their point of use. They also have a "cost in use", ie staff time spent in issuing the form and checking on its return that it had been correctly completed. For example, the MAFF report estimated that each capital grant form costs just 2.37 pence, whereas sending it out, checking it and following up queries costs £4.07.

17. The cost to the form-filler is especially intractable to calculate and I myself would not presume to value people's private time too nicely. Large firms can count the cost in cash terms fairly readily. For small firms and the individual, it may often be a case of "time means money" but more commonly perhaps of the exasperation and frustration that will follow on the heels of an initial distaste and reluctance combined with an inability to understand.

18. I would not claim too much for calculations in this area, but the DHSS team produced a most interesting illustration. They suggested that forms in use in their Department, which have an annual production cost of about £10 million, represent a true cost to the community of over £200 million a year. This means that an overall improvement of only one percent in the effectiveness of DHSS forms would save the community over £2 million a year.

19. In sum, bad forms cost money. Staff must spot wrongly completed forms and send them back. They must spend time dealing with queries where people do not understand. The form-filler also wastestime and money struggling to understand and complete the form.

Where do forms come from?

20. The law rarely specifies forms in detail. It is the policy and operational branches in departments which have the

main voice in whether a form should be produced, what its content should be and how the information it contains or the questions it asks should be presented.

21. Branches are anxious, naturally and rightly, that their Minister, their Department and they themselves should not be adversely criticised for failing to inform the public or business of their rights and responsibilities. But this tends to make self-protection one of the commonest characteristics of the Government form.

22. Some departments have recently put increasing effort into improving forms but forms design, and indeed forms work generally, remains a low status activity in most departments.

How do forms go wrong?

23. I believe that there is a mismatch between the good intentions of officials and the performance of their forms. Officials would be horrified to be thought careless or discourteous, but the teams' findings suggest that all too often forms do not put the form-filler first. The main points seem to be these:

(1) To a large degree, the way forms work in practice is taken by departments on trust. There is little "pilot testing" of new forms. Generally, forms are a tract of administration which is submerged from the view of Ministers and higher management.

(2) Many officials, particularly those in lower and middle management levels, see forms as unimportant or trivial. Some doubt whether it is right or necessary to communicate with the public in simple language. Work on forms design and improvement lacks prestige.

(3) The direct and indirect costs of forms are not considered when they are introduced.

(4) The language used in forms can be legalistics, lengthy and intimidating.

(5) Forms are too often hard to understand. Sometimes officials themselves do not understand the forms they send out or the procedural instructions associated with them. The computer may have a bad influence in this respect. And there are too few pointers to the form-filler of where he might get help.

(6) Error rates of over 30%, either by staff or the public, are common.

What should be done now?

24. The Government's general aim is that each department should have a policy for excellence in administration. The principal objectives of such a policy should include having as few forms and as successful forms as possible.

25. In practice, this means:

(1) Recognising that a form is only part of a piece of administration. It does not exist in its own right and should not be merged or controlled as though it did. But forms are both the face and voice of Government for many and they do deserve special attention.

(2) Seeing the policy for forms as part and parcel of the Government's wider policies for economical and effective administration, including the delegation of increased responsibility to line managers. Indeed, the forms policy will be progressively supported and assisted by other work already in hand, notably on the identification and control of running costs.

(3) Recognising that getting good forms is a practical job. It means, for example, policy and operational staff getting away from their desks and finding out what form-fillers make of the paper Government puts out. It calls for determination, knowledge and imagination by the senior management, line management and the Principal Establishment Officerin each department and, at the centre, from the Management and Personnel Office.

(4) In general terms, the most important thing is that the Permanent Secretary in each department lays on his policy and operational branches the responsibility for good administration, including forms, and that he checks regularly that his policy is in fact being implemented.

(5) In more specific terms, it includes:

(a) Looking first at the largest-issue forms or at the most heavily forms-based procedures of the department, since it may be impossible to do everything at once and it is wise to begin with forms and procedures of a substantial kind.

(b) Making branches responsible for forms also responsible for establishing and justifying the cost of new forms and appraising existing forms. The costs of forms to the form-filler should, equally, be assessed and justified wherever it is possible to do so.

(c) Calling for an annual report to the Permanent Secretary from the Principal Establishment Officer on the state of forms in the department. The PEO, on behalf of the Permanent Secretary, should arrange a progressive review of particular forms and procedures with line branches.

(d) Ensuring that, progressively, forms meet basic requirements of clarity, intelligibility and comprehensiveness. This is a responsibility to be shared between branches, design units in the department and others, notably the Central Office of Information and HM Stationery Office.

(e) Providing, according to the scale of the department, an official or team of officials to help the PEO and advise and encourage branches on forms control and design.

(6) The Management and Personnel Office should designate an officer as responsible for keeping up with the pressure for getting better, fewer forms; helping departments and encouraging them to learn from each other; and improving attitudes to forms through training.

Is that enough?

26. An occasional ruthlessness will be salutary. As a result of seeing for themselves, top managers should tear up some forms in the interest of better administration. But the main need will be for a steady and sustained determination to have as few forms as absolutely necessary and to make them excellent for their purpose. This will not be achieved over night. So

the example shown by Ministers and by top managers in getting the work going and in sticking at it will be critical to the success of the policy.

DEREK RAYNER

12 January 1982

DRAFT PERSONAL MINUTE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO ALL MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF DEPARTMENTS

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

1. Sir Derek Rayner has submitted his report on the review of administrative forms which I asked him to undertake last January. I enclose a summary of his conclusions and a copy of the report. Eight departments took part in the review, and I am grateful to the Ministers concerned for their co-operation.

2. The departmental teams looked at a small number of forms, aiming to show by example what can be achieved across the board. The results were good. Of the 93 forms examined, 26 kinds were recommended for abolition and 50 for redesign. This would mean nearly 5 million fewer forms being issued by government. Ministers' responses to the teams' recommendations have so far been vigorous, and I hope that it will continue to be so. Across central government as a whole, we should now move on to making all forms in all departments as good as they can be.

3. Because our forms affect every family and business in the country, I propose that we should publish our strategy for getting fewer and better forms as a White Paper. It would comprise Sir Derek Rayner's summary; a statement of what the Government intends to do; and a summary of the departmental exercises. Publication would be accompanied by an exhibition showing some of the very good work which departments are now doing.

4. I have invited the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to consult colleagues on the draft of a White Paper as soon as possible.

5. I am copying this minute to Sir Derek Rayner, the Joint Heads of the Civil Service and Mr Cassels.

MHT

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

REPORT TO THE PRIME MINISTER

PREFACE

1. You agreed in January that the then Lord President should commission a Government-wide review of forms and that I should co-ordinate it. This report is to inform you of the outcome of the review and to make recommendations for getting fewer and better forms in the future.

2. Eight teams of officials examined the forms issued by their departments. Their names are listed in Annex A.

3. The review was co-ordinated on my behalf by a central team of officials from the then Civil Service Department. They were Mr M H Grant, Miss M Exley, Mr I F Goddard and Mr T L Lonsdale who are now members of the Management and Personnel Office (MPO). I was greatly assisted by Mrs E Thoms, a staff officer in my own unit.

4. As well as advising and guiding the departmental teams, the central team have examined the arrangements for controlling and managing forms in all the main user departments. This report draws heavily on their conclusions and recommendations. I am grateful to them for all their hard work.

5. I would also like to thank the design staff of the Central Office of Information and HMSO for their valuable contribution in providing some very good redesigned forms, often at very short notice.

6. The total cost of the review is £250,000.

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

REPORT TO THE PRIME MINISTER

INTRODUCTION

1. Departments issue forms on a vast scale - the eight departments in this review use about 100,000 different types. Getting good forms takes time - not just because of numbers - but also because the job is about much more than simple words and good design. It usually means looking at the procedures which surround the form.

2. Even when these things are as good as they can be, there is no guarantee that the form will be well received. Business colleagues have passed to me more complaints about forms than about any other topic, but it is often not the form which is the real source of irritation. No-one likes paying tax, for example. On the other hand, people getting money from the government (for example farmers claiming grants for capital investments) may be more prepared to fill in long, complicated forms and make little complaint.

3. Irrespective of whether people choose to complain or do so reasonably, every form represents a burden to the person who has to fill it in. Some departments have devoted a lot of time and effort to easing this burden. For example -

- In 1977, the Inland Revenue set up a Communications Unit which, amongst other things, provides a "plain English" editing and design service for publications, using the knowledge it gains from experts in the field. Through informal contacts with schools, the unit has drawn up a list of words which people often have

trouble in understanding and which it seeks to avoid. The Unit has also produced a range of clear and helpful guides. One which I found particularly good is about income tax and school leavers (a copy is at Annex B).

- In 1978, DHSS commissioned research from the Salford Forms Market (SFM) a welfare advisory group, on supplementary benefit forms. SFM produced a number of redesigned forms which showed the advantages of good presentation and simple language. DHSS has also put in a lot of effort on its own account and this year one of its leaflets on family income supplement won an award from the National Consumer Council and the Plain English Campaign, a voluntary body which aims at improving official language inside and outside government.

- HM Customs and Excise have also worked hard to improve their forms. One of their most important projects was the radical review of the VAT return in 1978 which reduced the form to a straight-forward set of boxes on one side of a sheet of paper showing how much VAT is due and how much is deductable. Many businesses visited as part of this review said that the new form had made life much easier for them. This year, one of their leaflets, "Filling in Your VAT return", won first prize in the Plain English Awards.

4. The aim of this review was to find out more about the kinds of burden which forms present and to see how they could be reduced.

THE DEPARTMENTAL REVIEWS

5. Four teams looked at forms which are sent to individuals. They were from -

- Department of the Environment (DOE)
- Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS)
- Home Office (HO)
- Board of Inland Revenue (IR)

The four other teams looked at forms which are sent to businesses. They were from -

- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF)
- HM Customs and Excise (C and E)
- Department of Employment (DE)
- Department of Transport (DTp)

6. To avoid spreading their efforts too thinly, each departmental team chose a small number of forms for detailed study to show by example what could be achieved across the board. In all, they studied 93 kinds of form. They recommended that 26 of these should be amalgamated with others or withdrawn and that 50 should be redesigned. An example of what can be achieved in a short time is the proposed new Criminal Injuries Compensation form which replaces both the previous form and its accompanying notes. Copies of the new and old forms (and the notes) are at Annex C.

7. The teams collected evidence by talking to the divisions which initiate forms; to the staff who process them; and to the people who have to fill them in. Some teams conducted personal interviews with form fillers (eg DE, Customs, DTp). Others employed outside consultants to take on this work (eg DHSS, DOE).

8. The teams observed that individuals often find forms troublesome because they are hard to understand whereas businesses - at least the larger ones - usually know their forms (having accountants and other staff to support them), but find the sheer volume costly and irritating. Initially the teams looking at forms which go mainly to individuals concentrated on simplifying forms and the "business" teams on getting rid of them. But it soon emerged that effective review depended on both points being covered everywhere.

9. The teams also found that although there are some general rules which all forms should obey (on layout, language and sentence construction), there is no universal template which can be used to get good forms. Forms must be targeted at the people who will fill them in. They need individual attention.

10. Identified savings to departments, where quantified, would amount to more than £300,000. There would also be additional and very substantial savings which not all teams were unable to quantify arising from fewer enquiries from recipients, fewer forms to process and fewer incorrect forms. In all, nearly 5 million separate forms would be abolished.

11. Savings to businesses, where quantified, would total more than £5 million, but the reduction of burden on individuals (and on some small businesses) cannot be properly measured in money terms. The savings to them would be in personal time and in less irritation.

12. A list of the forms examined, together with a summary of each of the reports and a short account of progress on implementation, is at Annex D.

13. This review has shown by example how forms can be improved. In the sections of the report which follow I have set down my general conclusions and recommendations for getting wide and long-lasting improvements.

WHY FORMS ARE IMPORTANT

14. Forms are the means of putting many policies into practice. Most are connected with money - collecting it (eg the VAT return and the tax return), distributing it (eg supplementary benefit and MAFF subsidy forms) and making sure it goes to the right place (eg some national insurance forms). Others are about regulation (eg nationality applications and licensing of vehicle operators).

15. Forms show the face of government. Bad forms can damage its reputation and leave people unsure about their rights and responsibilities. Forms are also a window onto the policy and procedures behind them. Too many confusing forms suggest sloppy administration.

16. A good form can be a cost-effective way of gathering information. But one which is often completed wrongly is a burden on the form filler and on the department. Information must be sought a second time and more staff are needed to check and send back forms; postage costs rise and operations are delayed.

17. For example, the MAFF team reported that about half of the 300 Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance forms which the Taunton Divisional Office receives each year are filled in wrongly. Some can be dealt with by telephone (which means the price of a call and the time of farmers and staff). About 30 need personal visits by an Executive Officer (whose time costs nearly £8.00 an hour plus travelling). In the year ending March 1980, there were 9,975 such applications in England. If the 50 per cent error rate were to apply everywhere, this would mean nearly 1,000 visits each year.

THE STATE OF HEALTH OF FORMS

18. This review has shown that the standard of forms in the areas reviewed is not high. Departments use too much official jargon, too many legal terms and long, complicated sentences.

19. The Inland Revenue's old and new Capital Gains Tax leaflets show what can go wrong and how it can be put right. On business use of homes, the old leaflet said -

> "Where a dwelling house is used partly as living accommodation and partly for business purposes, the exemption applies only to that part of the dwelling house which is used as a private residence, that is to say, to the living accommodation. It is therefore necessary to apportion the gain which accrues when mixed premises of this kind are disposed."

20. The new leaflet prepared by the Inland Revenue Communications Unit says -

> "Do I lose any of the exemption if I use part of my home for business?
>
> Yes: you will not be exempt on the gain from the part used only for business purposes."

21. Notes may be separated from questions and put in a different order. The form filler is led into a maze of references. For example, the Inland Revenue report said of the 25 notes on the P70C (an assessment notice) -

> "The sequence in which the notes would need to be referred to ... is: 8, 1 and 2, 10, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 3 and 23, 3, 24 and 25, 26, 4, 4, 5, 6 and finally 7. As the notes are printed on the reverse ... comparison involves an effort of memory."

22. People may not be told what a form is for and so an important form may be ignored. Things then go wrong - either for the department (which may have to put in extra work to chase up lost information or lost revenue or may lose revenue altogether) or for the form filler. For example, the National Insurance Contribution Statement is issued in some cases when contributions paid in a year are not sufficient to count towards a pension (a copy is at Annex E). But the DHSS team reported that few people know what it is for. As a result, they can lose entitlement to benefits, but not find out until they want to claim.

23. Two forms with different purposes may appear to duplicate each other - again because the recipient is not told what the forms are for. An example of this is the Notification of Redundancy form and the Notification of Intention to Claim from the Redundancy Payments Fund. The first is aimed at alerting Government so that all possible measures can be taken to avert the redundancy. The second is to help the employer avoid making payments which he cannot claim back. But employers see the initial notification as wasteful bureaucracy.

24. The apparent reluctance to explain and inform can also extend to not telling the form filler where he can get help if he needs it. It is assumed that the recipient will understand. Not enough sympathy is shown to the person who does not.

25. The design and layout of most of the forms which the teams looked at were faulty in some respect. The typeface on some was too small (for example, the MAFF capital grants application and explanatory booklet at Annex F) and others were cluttered with too little space to write in answers. Many forms look, and are, unbusinesslike.

WHY FORMS GO WRONG

26. The teams showed that the most common cause of bad forms is that no one looks at them from the point of view of the recipient or thinks what will happen if they are misunderstood.

Sometimes there are practical difficulties -

- Hard-pressed divisions working on new legislation may be reluctant to take time to think about forms.

- The initiator may be trying to protect his Minister from accusations of maladministration and references to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (although the DHSS team reported that - in the view of their Second Permanent Secretary who deals with such cases - the PCA took a robust and common sense line on the need for simple forms).

- More than one group of staff may have an interest in the form. For example, in the Inland Revenue, policy on a tax or allowance is agreed with Ministers by a policy division which is quite separate from the management division which works out how to operate it. Both are separate from the technical division which advises on where it fits into the tax structure. Their Communications Unit and forms section have done a good job in co-ordinating these activities, but most other departments do not have units of this kind to rely on.

- The initiator may simply be trying to give the citizen the fullest possible account of his rights and responsibilities.

27. Whatever the cause, the result is usually to err on the side of caution. So the form ends up with slabs of original legislation, declarations and threats of penalties and much more detail than the average person either wants or needs.

28. Another very important cause of complicated or unnecessary forms is that the procedures behind them are cumbersome. Even if the scheme is good to start with, as new problems arise or in trying to get more

refinement, new rules are laid down and new questions added to the form. Every recipient is confronted with every question even though many questions do not apply.

29. The DE report points up a very telling example of how efforts to be consistent between the different pieces of legislation can lead to complications. The Redundancy Payments Scheme is operated on the basis of a 52 week rather than a calendar year because this was the basis of the earlier Contracts of Employment Act. As a result employers must use a special calendar (form RPL4 which shows the dates of the first and last days of every week since 1961) to work out what some of their employees are entitled to. An extract from the notes on use shows how forbidding the RPL4 is:

> "1. Find the relevant date, (ie the date up to which service is reckonable) in the left hand column. This will be the Saturday following the date of termination, or the actual date of termination if that is a Saturday.
>
> 2. Round <u>up</u> the number of years' service (ie either for total service or for service since the employee's 22nd or 41st birthday) and select the column headed by that number.
>
> 3. Read across horizontally from the relevant date in the left hand column to the corresponding date in the column selected in 2. above.

4. a. Test for total service - If service began <u>on or before</u> the date in 3., the figure at the head of the column shows total years of service. If service began <u>after</u> that date, reduce the figure at the head of the column by 1 year to get total years of service."

30. The team recommended (and the Secretary of State has accepted) that the calculations should in future be based on a calendar year. As soon as the necessary legislation is introduced, the RPL4 will be abolished.

31. Unnecessary forms may also arise where the same information is already collected by some other means. For example the Customs report showed that VAT certificates of posting overlap with the Post Office certificate of posting. The departmental team have recommended that the VAT forms should be withdrawn. This will save 1.5 million pieces of paper a year.

32. All the problems described above are made worse where departments have too few design experts and do not provide clear advice to initiators drawing up a form or reviewing existing ones.

33. The "family history" of the National Insurance Account Notice (at Annex G) shows some of the problems which can arise in trying to get a new form out. It is surprising, but not untypical, that at no point did anyone ask the consumer - the likely recipient of the form - whether it was comprehensible.

34. The stumbling block to putting forms right is a combination of attitudes and lack of information. The DHSS team reported as typical the views of some officials that

- complicated forms are an unavoidable consequence of administering the government machine;

- form are unimportant;

- simple English is inappropriate coming from a government department;

- simple English means talking down to people.

35. Initiators of forms rarely seek the views of the people (particularly in local offices) who will process them, even though they have first hand experience of the problems. This is a waste of a valuable information about forms and even more important, about how policies work in practice. It is also unfair on operational staff since it is usually they, not the divisions back in HQ, who have the job of dealing with complaints and queries from people who do not understand what is being asked of them.

36. The teams also noted that divisions responsible for forms rarely knew about the number filled in wrongly, the costs of processing and reprocessing forms, the cost of sending them out, the numbers sent out, or whether people understood them.

37. The result is a vicious circle. If divisions had information about the consequences of bad forms, it would jog them into making their forms better. But without an interest in getting better forms, they don't seek the information. The only way to get big and lasting improvements is to break the circle.

PUTTING THINGS RIGHT

38. Complicated forms which try to cover every eventuality and which contain a lot of official jargon and legal terms are the easy way out. If systems and procedures are good, they can be made comprehensible. It is not right, and it should not be necessary, for Government to protect itself at the expense of clarity: it is idle to pretend that swamping the form-filler with things he does not understand really helps him to protect his rights.

39. All Departments are different. Some are further down the road than others. There is much to do and the central team's report provides a good basis for improving forms. The Management and Personnel Office has devised a programme for helping Departments help themselves in the way that suits them best. I have set out below what I believe to be the essential task in ensuring that forms are well managed.

40. A form is only one part of a large scheme of administration. Even though it is more on show than the rest, it does not exist in its own right and should not be managed or controlled as though it did. This principle underlies all my recommendations.

41. The first task, whose importance cannot be overstated, belongs to the Permanent Secretary and his senior staff. The Permanent Secretary is responsible for how his Department as a whole goes about its work. This must include forms and the way in which the Department deals with its "customers". If top managers show that they care about the reputation of the Department and continually question the way it works with and the burden which it imposes on the outside world, staff down the line will do the same.

42. Secondly, because there is so much administration and there are too many forms for the Permanent Secretary to supervise all of them himself, the practical responsibility for getting good forms, like responsibility for procedures, is delegated from the Minister to the Permanent Secretary and then down to the policy, management and operations divisions which draw up the forms. It is these divisions - the line divisions - who have, and must accept that they have, the responsibility for making sure that every type of form which they initiate is necessary and as good as it can be.

43. Thirdly, there is, within each Department, a central staff function. On hand to help the line divisions and check on behalf of the Permanent Secretary that the Department is running well is the Principal Establishment Officer and the management services and other specialist staff normally brigaded under him.

44. Finally, the Management and Personnel Office has the task of developing and promoting best practice in the use of forms right across the Service. I welcome what I understand to be the MPO's policy in this matter, namely to advise and support Departments but not to second-guess them or attempt to do their work for them.

THE JOB OF TOP MANAGEMENT

45. My recommendations are as follows.

46. Top management in Departments, from the Permanent Secretary downwards, should take a personal responsibility for forms as part of their responsibility for procedures as a whole. They should require line divisions to give forms the attention they need and, by questioning any examples of bad forms which

they come across, check that this work is being done properly. They should get rid of forms wherever they can. They should make sure that certain fundamental questions are asked of each of their Department's most important forms: "What is it for? What does it cost, not just me, but also the form-filler? What value does it add?"

47. The Permanent Secretary should nominate his Principal Establishment Officer (or one of his senior colleagues) as responsible for reporting to him and to the Minister annually on the state of forms in the department. The report should be collated by the PEO's "forms unit" (see below) and say how many kinds of form there are and how many issued; it should show the numbers of forms which have been improved or abolished, the number of new forms, a summary of complaints and suggestions from the public and from staff and plans for further work. The report might usefully be copied to the MPO. Where this material can be presented as part of any wider management reporting system which the department may have, this should be done.

48. I believe that it is particularly important that in Departments which operate through local office networks, top management should find out what their local office staff have to say about forms, and, more important, about the procedures of which they are part. In my own experience, there is no substitute for going to the local office and listening and talking to the staff there. Top management should "adopt" at least two offices each of which they should visit regularly, in addition to their other normal visiting. At a lower level, Principals and others who are responsible for administering a scheme should go regularly to local offices to see for themselves what is happening in practice. These visits should cover all procedures relating to the programme and, in particular, to those parts of the process which are not well understood or which cause problems.

49. It might also be helpful to get a sample of officers who deal with forms in a cross-section of local offices to write to HQ regularly (perhaps every 3 months) about experience with forms and procedures. These reports should include any reservations which they or their colleagues have about particular forms or procedures, complaints made by the public and details of forms which are often filled in wrongly. The forms unit (see below) might collate these reports as a service to the Principal Establishment Officer and to the line. The sample of offices and officers should be changed every year or 18 months to keep reporting fresh. But I should make it clear that my own preference is very much for going out from HQ and for looking, talking and listening rather than for additional paperwork.

THE JOB OF THE LINE DIVISIONS

50. My recommendations are as follows.

51. Each Permanent Secretary should give specific responsibility for improving the quality of administration generally, including getting fewer and better forms, to the line divisions which are responsible for administration and for initiating forms.

52. In the Departments which produce most forms, it would probably be unnecessary and certainly too much to expect line divisions to review every single form thoroughly say every 3 or 4 years. The reports show that getting better forms is not a quick and easy job. Ploughing through the whole lot would kill enthusiasm off even before the first round was completed. Divisions should therefore identify the forms which are most important to them and which are in most need of review.

53. A good line division in a well-managed Department will know the cost of administering the tax, grant, service, benefit etc for which it is responsible. Included in this are costs directly attributable to forms.

These include:

- printing and procurement;
- storage;
- distribution;
- costs of issuing (including postage);
- costs of extracting information from completed forms;
- costs of sending back and reprocessing wrongly completed forms.

54. Line divisions should identify the potential costs attributable to all new forms; the actual costs of the forms which are in greatest current use; and the costs of other forms as they come up for reprinting.

55. Costing to a fine level of detail will not always be possible, but a best guess is often better than nothing at all.

56. Line divisions should find out how long it takes recipients to complete their forms. When the recipient is a business, line divisions should try to put a cost to the time.

57. Line divisions should keep a record of the numbers of forms they issue themselves or cause to be issued by others; of the numbers and kinds of complaints the forms cause; and the numbers filled in wrongly.

58. I recommend that, taking account of the results of this review and of the data available to him on cost and effectiveness, Principal Establishment Officers should settle with line divisions a programme of forms review. Such reviews may be of forms alone where that makes sense. Where it does not make sense to review forms alone, I recommend that forms should nevertheless be thoroughly examined as part of the Department's wider programme of reviewing its administration and procedures. Line divisions, or groups of divisions which deal with related forms or which all have an interest in one form, should nominate for this purpose someone at Principal level or above to have as one of his/her responsibilities the overall health of their forms.

59. The Management and Personnel Office central team have produced guidelines which will help divisions to choose the forms most needing improvement and put them right. Included in their advice is that:

- forms should say what they are for;
- forms should say where help can be obtained;
- line divisions should consider and cost alternatives to forms (eg a telephone call);
- line divisions should try to imagine the recipient's reaction when asked to complete the form and recognise that forms should inform and enquire in the briefest, clearest way possible.

60. These and the team's other guidelines on forms management and control are contained in the report of the central team which MPO is circulating to departments. I believe that their implementation will be an essential part of the drive to improve government forms.

THE JOB OF THE PRINCIPAL ESTABLISHMENT OFFICER AND MANAGEMENT AUDIT

61. My recommendations are as follows.

62. To help line divisions and the PEO with the programme of forms reviews, each Department in whose work with the public or with business forms play a substantial part should have a "forms unit" if it does not do so already. According to the scale on which forms are used, this should be an official or team of officials in its Management Services Division. It should assist line divisions examine their forms thoroughly; advise divisions on design and technical issues; and do redesign work where this is needed. The MPO should help Departments which are too small to have their own unit.

63. The ways in which forms units are set up and used need not be defined with overnice precision here. I myself think that the functions they could undertake on behalf of the Permanent Secretary in respect of <u>existing</u> forms include these:

1. Keeping a central record, based on divisional records, of the main kinds and numbers of forms issued and of the error rate of the main usage forms. The unit should, of course, know what work line divisions are doing on the form and what they intend to do.

2. Helping the Permanent Secretary and the PEO ensure that forms are getting the attention they need. But it should be the line divisions which get on with the work of review.

3. Getting to know and consult the organisations which experience the Department's forms (eg trade associations, Citizens' Advice Bureaux, neighbourhood centres, social services departments, etc).

4. Receiving copies of letters from MPs and the public complaining about major forms (as agreed with line divisions) so that it can help divisions in replying and note the things which give rise to the most common causes of concern.

5. Working with other sections of the Department's management audit staffs and with the line where the problems brought to notice look to be rooted in procedures rather than in the design or wording of forms.

64. I recommend that line divisions should consult the unit on proposed new forms. The unit should check that projected total costs have been established (including the likely burden on the form-filler), that all the information is essential and that alternatives to a form have been considered. The forms unit should have the right of objecting to a new form to the Permanent Secretary via the PEO. Line divisions should also invite the comments of the Department's Information Division.

65. As a general rule, line divisions should test the reaction of the public and staff to a form before it is introduced, with the help of the forms unit. Where such a test is not possible, only 6 months supply of the form should be printed and tests should be carried out during this time.

66. It should also be a general rule that line divisions should discuss requests for reprinting major forms with the forms unit to establish whether it would be timely to review the form before further stocks were produced.

THE JOB OF THE MANAGEMENT AND PERSONNEL OFFICE

67. My recommendations are as follows.

68. The Management and Personnel Office should be responsible on your behalf, and on behalf of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Joint Heads of the Civil Service, for keeping up the pressure to reduce and simplify forms across the Government service as a whole. This function might best be discharged by designating a particular officer for the purpose.

69. His/her jobs should include:

- identifying any problems experienced by Departments and commissioning work to solve them;
- keeping in touch with research and other new developments on forms design and usage;
- keeping in touch with outside interests (including the Plain English Campaign) which concern more than one Department;
- helping Departments to implement their arrangements for forms management and control;
- making sure that Departments know about the technical forms expertise available from HM Stationery Office and the Central Office of Information; and

- reporting to the Chancellor of the Duchy from time to time on progress with implementing the review's recommendations across the service.

70. The MPO should also take the lead in improving attitudes towards forms and improving expertise through training. It should work out training with Departments and the College. This should include, among other things, sessions for Administration Trainees on the importance of forms and how to get good ones.

CONCLUSION

71. The essential tools for doing these jobs are determination, knowledge and imagination: determination that administration shall be excellent, that it shall serve the citizen well and that in achieving these ends radical questions must be posed and answered in respect of both existing practice and proposals for the future; knowledge of the whole purpose of a scheme for administration, of the place within it of forms and of their cost and effectiveness; and imagination to put oneself in the place of the recipient.

72. A certain ruthlessness will be necessary from time to time. It is in the nature of any large organisation with which I am familiar for paper to grow over the years, unseen by higher management because they have not regarded it as part of their job to look to the quality of administration in terms of simplicity or cost-effectiveness. This is especially so in Government, where all the pressures of legislation and the Civil Service's honourable pre-occupations with accuracy and with attention

to detail place the biggest premium on comprehensiveness. But administration is now a massive and costly industry. Keeping it within the bounds of what the nation needs and can afford means that some forms will have to be torn up.

73. Tearing things up from time to time is salutary. But there is no real substitute for a policy of excellence in administration. The citizen pays for and is entitled to good government. In practical terms, this means deliberate and sustained measures to improve and reform the quality of administration.

DEREK RAYNER

January 1981

ANNEX A

DEPARTMENTAL REVIEWS - STUDY OFFICERS

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Alan Bennett

HM Customs and Excise

Dennis Edwards
Arthur Wells
David Parr
Sidney Gordon
Allan Robinson

Department of Employment

Maurice Gubby
Kathy Hegarty
Stuart Low
Roger Carter

Department of the Environment

George Back
Ian Milton
Salford Forms Market

Department of Health and Social Security

John Moyes
John Orr
Tony Bennett
Eamonn Kelly

Home Office

Alan Norbury
Angela Underhill
Fred Offler
Jeff Black

Inland Revenue

Brian Rennie
Teddy Sampson
Robin Green

Department of Transport

George Back
Ian Milton

tell your employer when you start work. He may be able to arrange with the tax office to pay you without taking any tax. If you pay tax before the arrangement can be made your employer will refund it to you.

How do I know I haven't paid too much tax?

At the end of each tax year your employer tells the tax office how much you have earned and how much tax you have paid. The tax office will check these figures with your PAYE code to see that the tax is right.

If at any time your code needs changing because your personal circumstances have changed, for instance you get married, let the tax office know at once. Do not wait for them to send you another tax return.

What happens if I change my job?

It is very important that when you leave a job you get a leaving certificate, form P45. This shows your PAYE code, your total earnings and how much tax you have paid since the start of the tax year. Give this P45 to your new employer so he can take the right amount of tax. If you do not have a P45 you will be put on an emergency code again.

If you do not have another job and you are out of work for more than a month you may be able to claim a tax refund. Follow the instructions on the P45.

Printed by Steepleprint Ltd. 8022333 2/80

Remember

1 You are responsible for filling in your tax return and sending it back to the tax office as soon as possible.

2 You will only pay the right amount of tax if your PAYE code is right.

3 If there is any change in your personal circumstances tell your tax office straight away.

4 Make sure you receive form P45 when you leave a job and hand it to your new employer otherwise you may pay more tax than you need to.

If you visit, telephone or write to your tax office always give your reference number and employer's name and address, as this saves time finding your file. In Scotland give your National Insurance Number as well.

If you want any help or advice do ask your tax office or any PAYE enquiry office. You will find the address in the telephone book under 'Inland Revenue – Taxes, HM Inspector of'.

If you decide to become self-employed and to start working for yourself tell your tax office straight away.

Issued by the Inland Revenue, February 1980.

Designed by Angela Slingsby, a student in the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication at the University of Reading.

Income tax & school leavers

This leaflet is to help you to understand something about the income tax system and how it will affect you when you start work.

ANNEX B

IR 33

What is income tax?

Income tax is an amount of money which is taken from your earnings each time you are paid. Everyone who earns or receives income over a certain amount in the tax year will pay income tax. The tax year does not follow the ordinary calendar year from January to December but begins on 6 April of one year and ends on 5 April of the next year. Our tax system is designed so that as you start to earn more money you will also pay more tax.

What happens to the money I pay?

You pay income tax to help towards the cost of services we all receive in this country. A few examples are the National Health Service, the Civil Service, defence and Social Security benefits. The Chancellor of the Exchequer announces in his Budget at the beginning of each tax year how much money he wants and how it is going to be spent. Some of his proposals will affect the tax you pay.

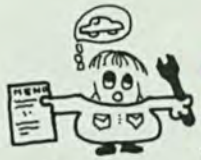
When do I start to pay income tax?

You will probably start to pay tax when you begin earning money after leaving school and getting a job. Your employer will tell the tax office that you have started work and they will send you an income tax return form. This form may seem rather complicated and there will be a lot of things on it that do not apply to you. This is because the same form is sent to many other people and some of them will have much more complicated affairs than yours. Just fill in the parts that apply to you. You will be asked for details of your income, and there will be a place for you to claim any allowances and expenses that are due to you.

Do I pay tax on everything I earn?

You will normally pay tax on everything you earn including tips, bonuses and part-time work. If you have invested any savings you will also pay tax on any interest you receive. Some Savings Bank interest is tax free, and tax on any interest from a Building Society is paid by the Society before you receive it. Some Social Security benefits are taxed but any benefit you may receive because you are sick or unemployed is tax-free.

Everyone can earn or receive a certain amount of income before they start to pay tax. This is called the single person's allowance and you are allowed the full amount even if you only work for part of the tax year. A married man can claim a larger allowance, and if his wife works an allowance is given against her earnings. There are also extra allowances for single parents, the blind and those that support a dependent relative. The total of your personal allowances is the amount you can earn in the tax year before you pay any tax. It is your tax-free pay.



Can I claim expenses?

The cost of tools or special clothing which you need at work can sometimes be claimed if they are not provided by your employer. You can also claim a reduction for your mortgage interest payments if you are buying a house, but you cannot claim for National Insurance Contributions or for the cost of travelling to and from work.

How is my tax bill worked out?

When the tax office gets your tax return they will work out and let you know the amount of your allowances and your PAYE code. This code represents your tax-free pay for the year and it is also given to your employer. He uses it with special tax tables which spread your tax-free pay between the number of pay days in the tax year, 52 if you are paid weekly or 12 if paid monthly. On each pay day the tables show the right amount of tax-free pay to be subtracted from your earnings and you only pay tax on what is left.

If for any reason you are not paid for a while, the tax-free pay for those weeks builds up until it can be subtracted from your earnings on a later pay day. If your earnings are less than your tax-free pay at any time then of course you do not pay any tax.

What is this PAYE?

PAYE stands for Pay As You Earn. This means just what it says, you pay your tax as you go along. Each time you are paid, the right amount of tax will be taken from your pay, as long as you have the right PAYE code.

What happens before I get my PAYE code?

It takes a little time for the tax office to sort out your code for you and remember they need your completed tax return before they can start. So when you first begin working you will have what is called an emergency code. Although this will give you the same tax-free pay each pay day as a single person, you may pay more tax than you should. This is because the emergency code does not give you the tax-free pay for those weeks earlier in the tax year before you started work. When you get your proper code the tax tables take those earlier weeks into account and you get a refund if you have paid too much.

I am going to college - do I pay tax on money I earn during the holidays?

If the amount you are likely to earn during the whole of the tax year is less than the amount of the single person's allowance,

ANNEX C

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board
10-12 Russell Square, London WC1B 5EN
Telephone: 01-636 2812 and 4201

cicb

Please do not write in this space

Reference No.

Application Form

- **Please fill in all the sections of this form. Read the questions carefully and give all the information asked for. Where necessary, please write *Don't know* or *Doesn't apply* or something suitable, rather than leave a blank.**
- **Please use black or very dark ink because it may be necessary to photocopy your application. If you need more space, write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.**
- **Please remember to sign and date the form at the end. If you are filling in the form for someone who cannot do it himself or herself, or who is under 18, you may sign it for them, but please give your full name and address and say what your relationship is to the injured person (for example, parent or friend).**
- **If you are under 18 and you complete and sign the form yourself, you must also ask your parent or guardian to sign and give full name and address.**
- **Please inform the Board immediately if you change your address.**

Experience has shown that these are all points which can cause delay to your application.

1 **Your full name**
Please say whether Mr, Mrs, Miss, etc., and give your family name first. Please write in BLOCK CAPITALS.

Your date of birth
If the injured person is under 18, his or her birth certificate should be sent with the form. It will be returned as soon as possible.

Please say whether you are single, married, separated, divorced, widow or widower

Your address

Telephone number during the day.

2 **When did the incident in which you were injured happen? Give day, month and year, and time**

Where did it happen?

What is the name of the person who injured you?
Please give this if you know it. If you don't know it, the Board may still be able to deal with your application.

Were you and the person who injured you living together as members of the same family at the time of the incident?

As clearly as you can, please describe the incident in which you were injured
If you need more space, use a separate sheet of paper.

Were there any witnesses?
Please give the names and addresses of any people who saw the incident, or who could give any information about it.

3 **Did you or anyone else report the incident to the police?**
If so, please give the name of the person who reported it. If not, say why it was not reported.

If it was reported, on what date was this done?

Who was it reported to?
Please give the name of the police station and the name of the police officer, if you know it.

4 **What injuries did you receive?**

Please note that under the authority you sign at the end of the form, the Board may obtain medical reports from any hospitals, doctors or dentists who treated you. After your application has been considered, and a final award has been made, you can then ask for copies of any medical reports obtained. If you or your representative provide a medical report, the Board will not normally refund its cost; this will only be done in exceptional circumstances and with the Board's prior written agreement.

If you received hospital treatment for your injuries, please give the name and address of the hospital and, if possible, your hospital reference number

How long were you under treatment?
Please give dates for beginning and end of treatment:
As in-patient

As out-patient

If you saw your own doctor, please give his or her name and address

If you received treatment from any other hospital or doctor, please give names and addresses

If you received dental treatment, please give the name and address of the dentist

Have you fully recovered from your injuries? If not, please describe your symptoms

If you have not fully recovered, and it is not known what the outcome of the injuries will be, the Board may award part of the compensation before the final decision can be made, as long as your application is otherwise within the scope of the scheme.

If you are still receiving treatment, please give the name and address of the hospital, doctor or dentist, etc.

It is important that the Board should know if you receive further treatment after you send in this application form, especially if you have to stay away from work or go into hospital. Please write and give details.

Have the injuries left any permanent scarring or deformity?

If the answer if yes, you may be asked later to send photographs, in which case the Board will contribute towards the cost. Please do not send any photographs unless asked.

5 **What was your occupation at the time of the incident?**
Please say what your job was, or whether you were at school, college, etc., or were a housewife, pensioner, etc.

How long were you away from work, or from school or college, as a result of your injuries?
Please give dates.

Have you lost any earnings as a result of the incident?

If you are employed, please give your take-home pay at the date of your injury
This should include overtime, bonuses, etc., but after deducting tax and National Insurance.

What payments have you received from your employers for the time you were off work because of your injuries?

If you continued to lose earnings when you went back to work, because of your injuries, please give details
Please note that there is a limit to the amount of compensation the Scheme can provide for this.

Please give the name and address of your employers and your work or clock number
If you had just started or were due to start a new job when you were injured, please give the names and addresses of both the new and previous employers. The Board will have to check your earnings with your employers.

If you are self-employed, or your earnings are in the form of fees or a share of profits, please state the total loss

In addition, please provide a separate detailed account with this form. You should be prepared, if required, to produce documents to support your claim, such as certified accounts and notices of assessments to income tax.

If you are a student, please give the name and address of your school or college

6 **Please give details, including amounts, of any out-of-pocket expenses incurred as a result of your injuries**

Extra fares
For example, to hospital for treatment.

Repairs or replacement of damaged dentures, spectacles, etc.
if this expense has not already been met in full by the National Health Service or the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS).

Repairs or cleaning of clothing
List each item. If possible, please send receipts.

If any clothing was damaged which you did not have repaired or cleaned, please give full details
List each item with the date you bought it and its original cost, and say why you did not have it repaired or cleaned. If possible, please send receipts.

Compensation for clothing is based on the depreciated value after cleaning or repair or, if it was not repairable or was destroyed, on its value at the time of the incident.

Any other expenses
Please note that the compensation scheme does not cover lost, stolen or damaged property (apart from clothing, etc.) or stolen money.

7 **What is your National Insurance Number?**

Have you applied to the DHSS for Sickness or Industrial Injury Benefit as a result of your injuries? If not, please say why not

If you are not self-employed, and the injuries happened in the course of your work, have you applied or do you intend to apply to the DHSS for Disablement Benefit? If not, please say why not

If you have been awarded a Disablement Pension or Gratuity under the Industrial Injuries Scheme, please send the Medical Board's decision with this form. It will be returned as soon as possible.

If you answered yes to either of the last two questions, please give the address of the DHSS office to which you applied for benefit

Have you received Supplementary Benefit since the incident?
If so, please give the address of your Supplementary Benefit Commission office.

Have you received Unemployment Benefit since the incident?
If so, please give the address of your Unemployment Benefit office.

Please note that benefits are deducted in full from any loss of earnings. If you are entitled to claim benefits but do not do so, the Board may still reduce compensation by the full value of those benefits. The Board may refuse to make an award until you have taken reasonable steps to claim benefits for which you are eligible.

8 Please give details of any pension or gratuity from your employers, or payments from an insurance company or similar body, which you have received as a result of your injuries

9 If you have received compensation for your injuries from any other sources, please give details
Compensation payments include compensation orders made by criminal courts, damages received through civil claims, or similar payments from any other source, including foreign compensation schemes. The Board will deduct any amount received in this way from the award they make. The undertaking you sign at the end of this application form will enable you to receive the full benefit of any compensation order made by a criminal court.

10 If you have previously applied to the Board for compensation for injuries received in any other incident, please give:
The date of the incident

The date of your application

The Board's reference number

11 I certify that all the statements I have made in this application form are true to the best of my knowledge, and that this is my only application to the Board in connection with this incident.

I undertake to tell the Board of any changes that might affect their decision on whether I am entitled to compensation and, if I am, to what amount.

I agree to give the Board all reasonable assistance, particularly in obtaining medical reports, if they are needed.

I authorise the following to assist the Board in considering my application:

The police, to give any relevant information, including copies of any statements I made to them and a list of any convictions which may be recorded against me.

The hospitals I attended, and the doctors, dentists and others who treated me, to give a report on my injuries and treatment.

My employers, to give information about my earnings, pension rights and other relevant matters.

Any Government Departments, local authorities or other public agencies in Great Britain or elsewhere from which I received social security benefits or any other payments, to give any relevant information.

Any Government-sponsored training or rehabilitation unit that I have attended, to give any relevant information.

I authorise the Board to ask any court responsible for enforcing a compensation order in my favour to hold any outstanding money received as a result of the order until the Board informs it that I have accepted or rejected their decision or final assessment for compensation.

I understand that the board may inform the authorities and person mentioned above that I have made this application, and tell them their decision.

Signature of applicant

Date

If you are under 18 you must also ask your parent or guardian to sign below and give the information requested.

If you have completed and signed the form for someone who is incapable or too young to do so, please sign below and give the information requested.

Signature

Full name

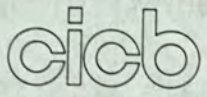
Relationship to applicant or status

Address

Printed in England for Her Majesty's Stationery Office by Colibri Press Ltd Pro 16429

CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION BOARD
10-12 RUSSELL SQUARE, LONDON WC1B 5EN
01-636 2812 and 01-636 4201

REF. NO
(For official use)



APPLICATION FORM (INJURY CASE)

Please complete all sections of this form – read the Notes carefully and give all the information requested This will help avoid delay. Please use *black* ink. Where necessary please provide your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. PARTICULARS OF APPLICANT

See Notes

a. SURNAME Mr/Mrs/Miss .....
BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE

b. First Names .....

c. Date of birth ..... d. Single/Married/Widow/Widower (delete as appropriate)

e. Address .....
.....
..... Telephone No. (Day time) .....

f. Occupation immediately before the incident .....

2. PARTICULARS OF CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN YOU WERE INJURED

a. Give the date (including year) and time of incident.....19..... at.....a.m./p.m.

b. Where did it take place? .....

c. Give the name of the offender(s) (if known) .....

See Notes

d. Were you and the offender living together as members of the same family at the time of the incident? ..... YES/NO

e. Give a *full* description of the incident in your own words:- .....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

f. Who saw the incident or can give the Board any other information about it? Give names and addresses:-
.....
.....
.....
.....

3. PARTICULARS OF THE REPORT TO POLICE

a. Were the circumstance of the injury reported to the police? YES/NO

b. If YES i. give the date reported and by whom.....
ii. state where and to whom it was reported (give name of police station and/or officer concerned if known)

See Notes

.....
.....

c. If NO give reasons .....
.....

4. PARTICULARS OF PERSONAL INJURY RESULTING FROM THE INCIDENT

See Notes

a. What injury did you suffer? .....

.....

.....

.....

b. Did you receive hospital treatment? YES/NO If YES:

i. give the name and address of hospital .....

.....

ii. state how long you were under treatment:

In-patient treatment from ..... to .....

Out-patient treatment from ..... to .....

iii. give hospital reference number.....

c. Did you consult your own doctor? YES/NO If YES give his full name and full address:

.....

.....

d. Have you received treatment from any hospital or doctor other than those mentioned at b. & c. above?

YES/NO If YES give name and address of hospital or doctor concerned.

.....

.....

e. Did you receive dental treatment? YES/NO If YES give the name and full address of dentist.

.....

.....

f. Have you fully recovered? YES/NO If NO describe symptoms:

.....

.....

.....

g. Are you receiving treatment for the symptoms? YES/NO If YES say from whom:

.....

.....

h. Has the injury left any permanent scarring or deformity? YES/NO

i. What was the period of absence from work? From..... to .....

5. PARTICULARS OF ANY EARNINGS LOST

See Notes

a. Have you lost earnings as a result of your injury? YES/NO

b. If YES and you are *self-employed* state your loss. (See Part 5(v) of Notes) .....

c. If YES and you are an *employed person:*

i. what was your average take-home pay including overtime/bonuses, etc., immediately before you were injured?

.....

ii. what payments (if any) have you received from your employers for your time off work as a result of the incident?

.....

.....

iii. give the name and address of your employer(s) and your work or clock No: .....

.....

.....

6. PARTICULARS OF ANY OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENSES

See Notes

a. Did you have any extra travelling expenses as a result of your injury? YES/NO

If YES give details and amount.....

b. Did you have any costs for repairing or cleaning clothing? YES/NO

If YES give details and amount .....

c. Was any clothing damaged which you did not have repaired or cleaned? YES/NO

If YES give the following details:

i. *Item*	ii. *Date of purchase and original cost*	iii. *Reason for not repairing and/or cleaning*
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....

d. Did you have any other expenses? YES/NO If YES give details:

.....

.....

7. PARTICULARS OF ANY SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS RECEIVED

See Notes

a. What is your National Insurance Number? .....

b. (i) Have you applied to the Department of Health and Social Security for Sickness or Industrial Injury Benefit as a result of your injury? YES/NO If NO please say why not:

.....

(ii) If your injury was sustained in the course of your employment and you are not self-employed have you or do you intend to apply to the Dept. of Health and Social Security for disablement benefit? YES/NO

c. If YES to either of the above give the address of the local office of the Department of Health and Social Security:

.....

d. Have you received Supplementary Benefit since the incident? YES/NO If YES give the address of Supplementary Benefit Commission's Office: .....

.....

e. Have you received Unemployment Benefit since the incident? YES/NO If YES give the address of Unemployment Benefit Office.....

.....

8. PARTICULARS OF ANY PENSION GRATUITY OR INSURANCE PAYMENTS

See Notes

a. Have you received any pension or gratuity from your employer(s) as a result of your injury? YES/NO

If YES give details:-

.....

.....

.....

b. Have you received any insurance payments as a result of your Injury? YES/NO

If YES give details:.....

.....

.....

PLEASE DO NOT FORGET TO DATE AND SIGN THE APPLICATION OVERLEAF

9. COMPENSATION PAYMENTS

See Notes

Have you received compensation for your injuries from any other sources e.g. courts, foreign compensation schemes, etc? YES/NO

If YES give particulars: .....

.....

.....

10. PARTICULARS OF PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

Have you already applied to the Board before for compensation in respect of any incident? YES/NO

If YES give:

i. Date of Incident..... ii. Date of application .....

iii. Board's reference.....

11. CERTIFICATE AND AUTHORITY

See Notes

Please complete the following certificate and authority. If you are applying on behalf of a person under 18 years of age or a person incapable of signing, you should sign in the space provided.

a. The statements in Parts 1 - 10 are true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I undertake to notify the Board of any change of circumstances which may affect the Board's decision as to my entitlement to or the assessment of compensation.

b. I agree to give the Board all reasonable assistance, particularly in relation to any medical reports they may require.

c. I authorise:

1. The doctor(s), the dentist(s), any other person who treated me for my injuries and the hospital(s) I attend(ed) to send the Board at their request a report as to my injuries and treatment.
2. The police to give to the Board all information relevant to my application including a copy of any statement(s) I have made to them and a list of any convictions which may be recorded against me.
3. Any public departments, authorities or agencies in Great Britain or elsewhere from which I receive(d) Social Security Benefits or any other payments whatsoever, to give the Board information relevant to my application.
4. My employer(s) to give the Board information as to my earnings, pension rights and other matters relevant to my application.
5. Any government sponsored training or rehabilitation unit which I have attended to give the Board any information relevant to my application.
6. The Board, immediately prior to consideration of my application for decision or final assessment of compensation, to give notice to any court responsible for enforcing a compensation order in my favour that any outstanding monies received or to be received by the court pursuant to the order should be held by the court until such Court is notified by the Board that I have accepted or rejected the Board's decision or final assessment of compensation.

d. I understand that the Board may notify the authorities and persons mentioned above that I have submitted an application and may inform them of the Board's decision.

Date:..... 19.....

If applicant is under 18 years of age, give name of parent or guardian:

.....

Address: .....

.....

.....

Applicant's own signature:.....

Signature of person applying on behalf of a person under 18 years of age, or on behalf of a person incapable of signing:

.....

Give relationship to applicant .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Dd8283977 14m sets 7/81 J.I.H. Ltd.,

cicb
CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION BOARD
10-12 Russell Square London WC1B 5EN
Telephone: 01-636 2812 and 01-636 4201 ext 3843

Date as postmark

In response to your enquiry I enclose a Guide to the Compensation Scheme, a copy of the 1969 Scheme (A) and a copy of the 1979 Scheme (B) and an application form. If having read these documents, it is decided to apply for compensation please complete the application form in accordance with the Notes below and return it to this office. You will then be sent a reference number to quote in all future correspondence.

PLEASE READ THE GUIDE FIRST

NOTES ON APPLICATION FORM

These notes explain what information the Board require and should be read carefully when you fill in the application form. All parts of the form should be filled in, but enter "None", "Not known" or "Not Applicable" if appropriate. Where a YES/NO alternative to a question is given delete as appropriate. If you do not give full information there will be delay.

Part 1 Particulars of Applicant

(i) If the injured person is incapable of completing and signing the form, the person who completes it on his behalf should sign it as indicated on page 4 of the application form, and state his address and relationship to the injured person (See also note at Part 10 overleaf).
(ii) If the applicant is under 18 his birth certificate should be sent with the application form. It will be returned as soon as possible.
(iii) It is essential that you notify the Board immediately of any change of address; unless you do so the progress of your application will be delayed.

Part 2 Particulars of Circumstances when you were injured.

Please state:-
(i) The name of the offender if known (The Board may deal with your application although the offender has not been traced).
(ii) The names and addresses of any witnesses who saw the incident, if known.

Part 3 Particulars of the Report to the Police

The particulars given in Parts 2 and 3 will enable the police to identify the incident and to send the Board a confidential report. The police will also send the Board a copy of your statement, if you made one, and a list of any convictions which may be recorded against you, in accordance with the authority you sign at the end of the form.

Part 4 Particulars of Personal Injury

(i) The Board may obtain medical reports, under the authority you sign at the end of the form, from your own doctor or dentist, and from the hospital(s) where you received treatment.
(ii) If you have not fully recovered and the medical prognosis is uncertain, the Board may make an interim award.
(iii) **It is important that you should keep the Board informed if you undergo further medical treatment after you have sent in the application form, particularly if it involves absence from work or admission to hospital.**
(iv) If your injuries have resulted in permanent scarring or deformity, you may be asked to send photographs and the Board will contribute towards the costs. Do not send any photographs until requested.
(v) After your application has been considered by a member of the Board you will be advised of his decision and may then request copies of medical reports provided for the Board.

Part 5 Particulars of any Earnings Lost

(i) Your average net earnings after deduction of tax and National Insurance should be stated; they will be checked with your employers in accordance with the authority on page 4 of the application form.
(ii) If you had just started, or were due to start a new job when you were injured, the name and address of both the new and the previous employer should be given.
(iii) If, when you returned to work, you continued to lose earnings as a result of the injury, give details.
(iv) The Scheme imposes a limit on the amount of compensation to be awarded under this head.
(v) If you are in business on your own account, or your earnings are in the form of fees or a share of profits, you should submit with this application a detailed account of the loss you have suffered. You should be prepared to produce, if requested, books of accounts, tax assessments or other documentary evidence in support of your claim.

Part 6 Particulars of any Out-of-Pocket Expenses

(i) Details should be given of out-of-pocket expenses resulting directly from the injuries; for example fares to hospital for treatment, repairs to or replacement of damaged clothing, spectacles or dentures.
(ii) Under certain circumstances (eg if you are claiming Supplementary Benefit) you may be eligible to claim for hospital expenses, dental treatment, spectacles and prescriptions from the DHSS. In such cases no claim should be made to the Board, but the advice of your local office should be sought.
(iii) Compensation for clothing is based on the depreciated value after cleaning or repair, or on its value at the date of the incident, if it was not repairable or was destroyed. The date of purchase of the article and its original cost should be stated; any receipts you have should be attached to the form.
(iv) The board do not pay compensation for lost, stolen or damaged property.

Part 7 Particulars of any Social Security Benefits received.

(i) These details are required because benefits are deducted in full from any loss of earnings.
(ii) If your injury was sustained at work or on duty, and you have been awarded a Disablement Pension or Gratuity under the Industrial Injuries Scheme, the Medical Board's decision should accompany the application form. It will be returned as soon as possible.
(iii) If you are entitled to claim benefits but do not do so, the Board may reduce compensation by the value of those benefits. The Board may refuse to make an award until you have taken reasonable steps to claim benefits for which you are eligible.

Part 8 Particulars of any Pension, Gratuity or Insurance Payments.

(i) If you have to retire from work through ill health due to your injury, particulars should be given of any pension or gratuity you receive from your employers.
(ii) Details should be given of any payments received from any insurance company or similar body, as a result of your injury.

Part 9 Compensation Payments.

Compensation payments include compensation orders made by criminal courts, received through civil claims, or similar payments from any other source, and any award made by the Board will be reduced by any sum so received. The undertaking in part II (c) (6) will enable the applicant to receive the **full** benefit of any compensation order made by any criminal court as soon as the Board has decided to make any award irrespective of whether full payments are made under the Court's order.

Part 10 (See also note at Part 1 overleaf) Certificate and authority.

(i) If the applicant is under the age of 18 and completes the form himself he should write the name and address of his parent or guardian in the space provided.
(ii) If the form has been completed and signed on behalf of an applicant who is under the age of 18, or who is of full age but unable to complete and sign it himself, the name and address of the person completing the form and his relationship to the applicant should be stated in the space provided.

Dd8283977 14m sets 7/81 J.I.H. Ltd.,

ANNEX D

SUMMARY OF DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

1. The team looked at forms in two areas -

- the Investment Grant leaflet (AHS2) and claim form (AHS3). They identified an error rate of about 30 per cent on claims received at one divisional office. HMSO produced redrafts of the forms.

- the Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance Form (HCA9). The team found an error rate of about 50 per cent on this form at one divisional office and made alternative sets of recommendations for either improving it or collecting information in another way.

2. If implemented these recommendations would save MAFF at least £20,000 with substantial additional savings in farmers' time.

Progress on Implementation

3. Ministers have accepted the need to reduce the error rates of these forms and work is in hand to do this. This will build on the recommendations in the report.

Customs and Excise

4. The team looked at a wide range of forms taken from the following areas -

- Customs imports. The team examined the C10, C10A, C10X, C91, C105A, C109A, C130, C513, C578, C1204 and the C15. They recommended extensive changes (and shortening) to the C10 and simplification of other forms in the C10 'family', aligning them to the C10 where possible. Redrafts of some forms were produced. If implemented the proposals would save the department an estimated £30,000 pa and businesses an estimated £1 million-£1.5 million.

- Personal exports and tax-free car sales schemes (VAT 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 417). The team recommended merging the two tax-free car export schemes (with forms VAT 410 and 411 and VAT 412 and 415 being simplified and merged) and the provision of only one retail export scheme (with forms VAT 408, 409, 413 and 414 being replaced by a single form).

- other VAT forms. The team recommended that 3 VAT assessment letters (151R, 152R and 152(A)R) should be combined; that two notices of assessment (VAT 189 and 191/2) should be merged; that minor changes should be made to the main VAT return (VAT 100); and that 3 certificates of posting forms (VAT 442, 443 and 445) should be abolished.

- other forms. The team recommended that a betting duty form (BD 106) should be abolished and minor changes should be made to the CAP export levy schedule (C1226).

5. In all, the team examined 37 forms. They made recommendations for abolishing 4 kinds, saving a further 8 by merging a total of 13 forms to produce 5, and redesigning 10 of the remaining 20 forms. Their proposals would result in approximately 1.5 million fewer forms being issued each year and would save the department an estimated £39,000 and businesses an estimated £4.9 million.

Progress on Implementation

6. Ministers have rejected the recommendation for merging the three VAT assessment letters. Two further recommendations, merger of VAT 189 and 191/2 and merger of VAT 410 and 411, are subject to further consideration and in respect of the latter the adoption of a common period of

tax free use for cars of 12 months has been rejected. The team's proposals which have been accepted will therefore save 8 kinds of forms with a possible 2 further savings subject to study, and will mean about 1.5 fewer issued each year. This will save the department an estimated £32,000 and businesses an estimated £2.5 million.

Department of Employment

7. The team concentrated their efforts on three forms associated with the Redundancy Payments Scheme (RP1, RP2 and RP4) and the Notification of Proposed Redundancies (HRI). They made recommendations for combining the RP1 and RP2 and proposed that the basis of calculating redundancy payments should be changed from a 52 week year to a calendar year (thus doing away with the need for the special calendar - RPL4).

8. The team estimate that abolishing the RPL4 would save the department nearly £79,000 pa and employers about £180,000 in processing costs. It would also mean 25,000 fewer forms being issued each year. In addition, combining the RP1 and RP2 forms would result in 150,000 fewer forms being issued, completed and processed each year.

9. The report shows clearly that attempts to achieve consistency and equity can often produce complicated procedures and complicated forms. It recommends that greater attention should be paid to the operational implications of legislation at the drafting stage.

Progress on Implementation

10. The Secretary of State for Employment has accepted the recommendation for moving from a 52 week to a calendar year and most of the other recommendations in the report. I am in correspondence with the Secretary of State for Employment on ways of further simplifying the redundancy payments calculation.

Department of the Environment

11. The department commissioned a study from the Salford Forms Market (SFM) aimed at simplifying a small number of forms. SFM decided to concentrate on three forms - the Application for Registration of Fair Rent (RRI) and two letters associated with it (RR2 and RR2S). They recommended that all three should be simplified and produced redesigned forms. They also looked briefly at a number of other DOE forms (in particular the Right to Buy Claim Form (RTBI) and guidance notes) and indicated ways in which they could be improved.

Progress on Implementation

12. The report on the SFM study suggested that it would not be appropriate to issue the redesigned rent assessment forms as they stand. I am in correspondence with the Secretary of State for the Environment on the best way of taking the work forward.

Department of Health and Social Security

13. The team looked at the following social security forms -

- Applications for a National Insurance (NI) Number. The team recommended that one form (CF8) should be simplified and another (CF8A for people under 18) abolished.

- NI contribution rates for women. The team recommended that two forms - one for widows and one for wives (CF9A and CF9) - should be simplified and merged and that the new form should also serve where necessary as a NI application (reducing the issue of CF8s by 50,000 pa).

- NI Contribution Statement an Leaflet. The team recommended that the RD20 and RD20A should be simplified and not issued automatically (which might save up to 1.75 million forms a year).

- NI Contributions Direct Debit Form (CF351). The team found a 33 per cent error rate and recommended that a standard format should be used in line with Bank of England guidance.

- Contribution Deferment Forms. The team recommended that procedures should be changed so that deferment was granted for three years rather than one, thus reducing the number of forms (CF359 and CF379) and leaflets (NP18 and NP28) issued and processed by up to two thirds. They also identified wasteful over-production of forms and leaflets of about half a million prints a year.

- Contribution Refund Forms. The team examined the CF28E, CF28F, CF28(NP) forms (for refunds dealt with by local offices) and the RD505 series (for refunds from DHSS Newcastle). They found design faults, too much jargon and overlap between the forms and recommended a thorough overhaul linked to procedural improvements.

14. In all 16 forms were examined (some with associated leaflets) and 1 standard letter. The team proposed that 12 should be redesigned and 4 kinds abolished. If implemented the report would save the department an estimated £170,000 in printing costs plus the time of the public and DHSS staff in completing and processing the forms. It would result in the issue of 3 million fewer forms each year.

15. The team also made detailed recommendations for improving the control and quality of forms in DHSS and proposed a two year review of major forms followed by a programme for improving forms as they are reprinted.

16. Research commissioned from Social and Community Planning Research explored public attitudes to DHSS forms and showed that the public generally found them hard to understand. The report looks at why forms go wrong and makes proposals for putting the problems right.

Progress on Implementation

17. The Secretary of State has accepted all the core recommendations in the report. A forms unit is being set up and a programme for reviewing all major DHSS forms put in hand.

Home Office

18. The team looked at a wide range of forms in five separate areas -

- Immigration. With the help of the Immigration Department, the team examined 8 standard letters and recommended that they should be replaced by a single standard application form which will clarify what is expected of applicants. They also proposed that a guide explaining the rules should be issued instead of individual letters about particular queries.

- Nationality. The team recommended reducing the 15 application forms to 7 or 8.

- Broadcasting. The team recommended shortening and simplifying the TV licence.

- Criminal Injuries Compensation. The team with the help of COI made proposals for simplifying and merging the application form and leaflet.

- Probation Sponsorship. The team proposed that the 40 forms in this area be reduced to less than 20.

19. In all, the team examined in depth 18 forms and leaflets. If accepted their proposals would result in about 8 fewer kinds of form and 10 redesigned forms.

20. An important theme in the report is that forms which contain legal jargon tend to confuse rather than protect the rights of the applicant and can result in extra costs to the department from wrongly completed forms.

Progress on implementation

21. The Home Secretary has accepted all the team's recommendations. The new draft of the television licence is now being discussed with the Post Office and the new Criminal Injuries Compensation forms with the CIC Board (who have proved very receptive to the suggested improvements).

Inland Revenue

22. The team looked at the following forms -

- The P1 tax return. The team made recommendations for shortening the form and making it easier to understand.

- The 11P tax return (for people with more complex tax affairs). The team again made recommendations for cutting back the information requested, partly by using other Revenue sources.

- The R40 and R249 forms for claiming refunds where allowances exceed income. The team questioned whether all the questions were necessary and recommended improvements.

- The P70 Notice of Assessment. The team put forward a new design prepared by Reading University and proposed procedural improvements which would cut down the number of P70s issued and processed from the 3 million issued during 1980/81.

23. The team also made recommendations for strengthening the control of forms in the department.

Progress on Implementation

24. All the team's recommendations have been accepted.

Department of Transport

25. The team looked at 7 types of forms used for goods vehicle operator licensing. They identified underlying complexities in the way the system was administered. They were not able to come to firm conclusions in the time available but suggested ways (including making licensing discs not specific to vehicles) which might simplify the system for both licensing authorities and operators.

Implementation

26. I am in correspondence with the Secretary of State for Transport on ways of taking these ideas forward.

ANNEXE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY

1. Statement of National Insurance Contributions recorded as paid for the year

(a) Class 1. As an employed person	(i) amount at the standard rate	£	£	£
	(ii) amount at the reduced rate	£	£	£
(b) Class 2. As a self-employed person	Number of contributions			
(c) Class 3. (voluntary) contributions	Number			
2. Earnings factor derived from these contributions including credits where available (note 1)		£	£	£

SPECIMEN

3. Contributions needed to raise the record for the year ending 5th April to the qualifying level for pension (note 2) £

N.I. NUMBER (note 3)

Please keep this for reference. If after reading the enclosed leaflet and the notes on the reverse of this form you think any entries are wrong or have any queries please contact your local Social Security Office.

RD20 ISSUED

EXPLANATORY NOTES

NOTE 1. Your earnings factor is derived from contributions paid or credited and is expressed as a whole number of pounds. Credits are not awarded if the earnings factor derived from your paid contributions alone equals or exceeds the prescribed level (see the enclosed leaflet) required to count towards retirement and widows pensions. Contributions are only payable on earnings within certain limits and because of this and the possible inclusion of credits your earnings factor may differ from your gross earnings for the year. Class 1 reduced rate contributions do not give entitlement to National Insurance benefits and therefore have no earnings factor.

NOTE 2. If you wish to pay this amount you should contact your local Social Security Office and produce this statement. If you wish to pay by cheque it should be crossed, made payable to the Department of Health and Social Security and sent to your local Social Security Office together with this statement (which will be returned to you). A married woman or widow who has chosen to pay reduced rate Class 1 and not to pay Class 2 contributions in respect of the tax year is not entitled to pay voluntary contributions.

NOTE 3. The number shown is your National Insurance number. It is important that you quote it correctly in all correspondence with the Department and that you give it to your new employer when you change jobs so that he may show it on your deduction card. Failure to do so could result in your contributions not being posted to your account and may affect your entitlement to benefit.

NOTE 4. If you change your address or your name, e.g. on marriage, it is important that you notify your local Social Security Office.

For further explanation of the entries overleaf please read the enclosed leaflet.

RD20 Reverse

Home responsibilities protection

If, during the *whole* of the 1979/80 tax year you

- received Child Benefit for a child under 16,
  or
- took care of a person receiving Attendance or Constant Attendance Allowance,
  or
- received Supplementary Benefit to enable you to care for an elderly or incapacitated person,

you are entitled to have your basic pension rights protected without paying contributions for that year; this is called *Home Responsibilities Protection.* Its effect is to reduce the number of qualifying years of contributions needed for a standard-rate basic pension (or widow's benefit).

BUT it does not apply if you are a married woman or widow and retained the right to pay contributions at a reduced rate during 1979/80.

Any entitlement you may have to Home Responsibilities Protection is NOT recorded on the enclosed statement.

If you are entitled to Home Responsibilities Protection and have been asked to pay 'make-up' contributions, *you must decide* whether to

- pay the contributions and make the year a qualifying one
  or
- rely on Home Responsibilities Protection.

A qualifying year of Class 3 contributions may sometimes give you a higher rate of basic pension than a year of Home Responsibilities Protection.

If you are in doubt, talk to your social security office. It is particularly important to do this if you look after a person receiving Attendance Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance; or you are the alternative payee for Child Benefit.

If you think your statement is wrong

If you think there is a mistake in your statement, get in touch with your social security office. Tell them your full name, address and National Insurance number, and say what you think is wrong.

If you think the record of your Class 1 (employee) contributions is wrong, you should *also* give

- the name and address of every employer you worked for during the tax year 6 April 1979 to 5 April 1980
- the dates you worked for each employer
- the amount of Class 1 contributions you paid in each job (send in pay slips, or other evidence, showing this)
- the works number and department, or any other identifying details for each job.

If you think the record of your Class 2 (self-employed) or Class 3 (voluntary) contributions is wrong, you should say

- how you paid the contributions (such as by stamp, cash, direct debit)
- how many contributions you claim to have paid (send in receipts for stamped cards or contributions paid by cash, and any other proof you have).

If, as a result of your query, contributions or credits are added to your account, you will be sent a revised statement.

If you are outside Great Britain and Northern Ireland

If you went abroad from Great Britain, send any enquiry to:

Department of Health and Social Security, Overseas Branch, Newcastle upon Tyne, England, NE98 1YX.

If you went abroad from Northern Ireland, send any enquiry to:

Department of Health and Social Services, Overseas Branch, Castle Buildings, Stormont, Belfast, Northern Ireland, BT4 3HH.

If you are, or have been, absent in an EEC country, or in one with which the UK has a reciprocal agreement (see leaflet *NI.38)* you should get advice from Newcastle or Belfast before making any payment.

If you wish to pay 'make-up' contributions you should pay in sterling by cheque, money order, etc. to Newcastle (or, if you went abroad from Northern Ireland, to Belfast). Send with the payment either your statement, or a note giving your full name, address, National Insurance number, and income tax year for which payment is being made.

Your National Insurance number is important

Many other people may have the same name as you, but your National Insurance number is unique, and you keep the same one for life. It is shown on your statement; be sure you keep a careful note of it.

You will need to give your number when you claim benefit, or make an enquiry about your National Insurance contributions or other social security matter affecting you or your family.

It is also important that your employer is given the correct number so that your contributions are recorded in the right account. Otherwise you might lose benefit.

If you want to know more

Copies of the leaflets mentioned can be obtained from your local social security office, where you can also get help if you are not sure about your contribution or benefit position.

This leaflet is for general guidance only and should not be treated as a complete and authoritative statement of the law.

Leaflet RD.20A: Issued by the Department of Health and Social Security

Dd. 8218234 1500M 11/80 M.P.& S.Ltd.

RD.20A/Jan 81

Your national insurance contribution statement

for the year ended 5 April 1980

Your national insurance statement of account for the tax year which ended on 5 April 1980 is enclosed

If you did not ask for this statement, it is sent to you

- because your contributions for the year are not enough to count towards retirement pension, and, in the case of a man, widow's pension
  or
- to amend a notice sent to you earlier.

This leaflet will

- help you to understand the details of your statement,
- tell you what to do if you decide to pay voluntary Class 3 contributions to make the year count towards retirement and widow's pension.
- tell you what to do if you think the statement is wrong.

Don't do anything about the statement (UNLESS you think it is wrong) IF

- you have been told by DHSS that you already satisfy the contribution conditions for retirement pension at the standard rate
  or
- you received Job Release Allowance during the 1979/80 tax year.

Your statement shows

- the Class 1, 2 or 3 contributions on your record. Standard-rate Class 1 contributions (both contracted-out and not-contracted-out) are shown separately from the reduced-rate contributions paid by some married women and widows, because reduced-rate contributions do not count for benefit and are not included in the *earnings factor.*
- your *earnings factor,* on which your pension rights depend. This is made up from
  - the total standard-rate contributions on your record
    and
  - any credits you have been given (for weeks of sickness or unemployment, for example)
- the amount of voluntary Class 3 contributions you may pay to bring your *earnings factor* up to the level at which the year can count for basic retirement and widow's pension
- your National Insurance number.

If you asked for the statement, it will not include any contributions about which there is still any query.

Does your record for the year count for pension?

This depends on your *earnings factor* for the year. It must be at least £1,014.

How your earnings factor is worked out
Each week you worked as an employee and earned at least £19.50 a week, you paid earnings-related Class 1 contributions. So, for example, if you earned exactly £19.50 a week for 52 weeks, you will have an earnings factor of £1,014 (that is, £19.50 x 52) — enough to count for basic pension. If you earned more than this each week, you will have obtained an earnings factor of £1,014 over a shorter period.

The maximum weekly earnings on which you had to pay contributions was £135.

Each Class 2 (self-employed) and Class 3 (voluntary) contribution, and each credited contribution, gives an earnings factor of £19.50 a week, so that 52 such contributions or credits in a year give an earnings factor of £1,014.

A contribution may be credited for a whole week

- for which it is accepted that you were incapable of work, or unemployed and available for employment (such as while claiming sickness, invalidity, or unemployment benefit)
  or
- when you were following a course of training approved for credits

or
- when you were entitled to invalid care allowance for looking after a severely disabled relative who was receiving an attendance allowance.

BUT, no matter how many weeks you were sick or unemployed, *credited contributions* cannot bring your total earnings factor, for benefit purposes, above £1,014.

Also, it is only under certain conditions that credits count for sickness, unemployment, or maternity benefits.

A married woman or widow cannot have credits if she has chosen to pay reduced-rate contributions.

If your earnings factor does not reach £1,014, none of the contributions you paid during the year will count for retirement or widow's pension.

BUT, if your earnings factor from *paid contributions* for the year is more than £1,014, the extra will be included in working out the additional (earnings-related) pension you will be able to get. (Or, if you have paid contracted-out contributions, the extra will count in working out your guaranteed minimum pension.)

If you want to know more about additional pension and guaranteed minimum pension, get leaflet *NP.32* from a local social security office.

Box 3 of your statement

- *The amount needed to bring your earnings factor up to the qualifying level is shown in Box 3 of the statement.*
- *If there is a 'NIL' entry in Box 3, your earnings factor is already at or above that level, and you do not need to do anything.*
- If you asked for the statement and Box 3 is blank, this could be because
  - there is a query on the type or rate of contributions you paid,
    or
  - you are liable for Class 2 contributions which have not been recorded,
    or
  - you are a married woman or widow who has chosen to pay reduced-rate Class 1 and no Class 2 contributions.

If none of the above reasons applies in your case, you should ask at your local social security office.

What to do if your earnings factor is below £1,014

You may be able to 'make up' your account, so that the year can count for pension, by paying voluntary Class 3 contributions. The amount you would have to make up is shown in Box 3 of your statement.

In some cases, the contribution conditions for retirement and widow's pensions may be satisfied even if these voluntary contributions are not paid. The contribution conditions are explained in leaflets *NP.32* (retirement pension) and *NP.36* (widow's pension). If you are not sure about your position, ask your local social security office for advice.

Voluntary Class 3 contributions also count for maternity grant, death grant and child's special allowance, but NOT for sickness or unemployment benefit or maternity allowance.

If you wish to make up your account, you should pay without delay, as there are strict time limits. If you do not pay within these limits, the contributions will not count. If you want to know more, get leaflet NI.48 from your local social security office.

You can pay 'make-up' contributions by cheque, Giro-cheque, or postal order at your local social security office.

You should always send your statement with the payment, or a note giving your full name, address, National Insurance number, and the year for which the payment is made.

(If you are paying from outside Great Britain or Northern Ireland, see page 6 of this leaflet.)

Men over 60 and women over 55

If you are over these ages, you will not need to pay 'make-up' contributions

- for any period during which you received Job Release Allowance. Contributions needed for pension purposes will be paid by the Department of Employment when you reach pension age (65 for men, 60 for women)
  or
- if you have already paid enough contributions in earlier years to qualify for a basic retirement pension at the standard rate
  or
- if you have paid too few contributions in earlier years for it to be possible for you to qualify for any pension at all.

If you are not sure what to do, ask at your local social security office. Tell them your National Insurance number.

Widows

There are special rules to help some widows to get retirement pension at age 60.

If you are getting *widow's pension* or *widowed mother's allowance,* you may not need to pay any more contributions to qualify for a basic retirement pension at the standard rate.

Ask at your local social security office for advice before deciding whether to pay 'make-up' contributions. Tell them your National Insurance number.

ANNEX F

DIVISIONAL OFFICE STAMP

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE GRANT SCHEME

EXPLANATORY LEAFLET FOR INVESTMENT GRANTS

PLEASE READ THIS LEAFLET CAREFULLY BEFORE STARTING WORK AND KEEP IT FOR FUTURE REFERENCE. YOU SHOULD ALSO READ CAREFULLY ALL FORMS AND CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING THE SCHEME AS THEY MAY ADD TO OR CHANGE THE INFORMATION IN THIS LEAFLET. IF YOU NEED MORE ADVICE ASK THE DIVISIONAL OFFICE AT THE ADDRESS ABOVE.

(NOTE: This leaflet is only a guide to the Scheme and is not legally binding on the Ministry).

1. INTRODUCTION

There are two new grant schemes. One, the Agriculture and Horticulture Grant Scheme (AHGS), replaces the Farm Capital Grant Scheme (FCGS) and the Horticulture Capital Grant Scheme (HCGS) and offers grant on individual items of capital investment. These are known as Investment Grants.

The other, the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Scheme (AHDS), replaces the Farm and Horticulture Development Scheme (FHDS) and offers grants under approved development plans. These are known as Development Grants.

You may apply for **either** Development or Investment Grants but not for both.

This leaflet deals with Investment Grants. Another leaflet AHS 5 deals with Development Grants.

You do **not** need prior approval to qualify for an Investment Grant but you **do** need to make sure that any work for which you intend to claim grant complies with the relevant requirements.

If you accept an Investment Grant you must allow the Ministry to inspect the work and all relevant documents at any reasonable time during the following two years.

No claims will be accepted by the Ministry under this Scheme after 31 December 1985.

2. WHAT ITEMS ARE ELIGIBLE?

To be eligible, an item must be a capital investment and must remain in agricultural use for at least two years after you receive grant. This means that it must be new and reasonably permanent, not temporary or make-shift. Renewals, replacements, reconditioning and adaptations are eligible but not routine maintenance or the making good of normal wear and tear. The full range of eligible items is set out in Appendix 1. Further details about individual items, including the standard of work required are given in a series of leaflets listed in Appendix 1, Part III.

3. WHAT ENTERPRISES ARE ELIGIBLE?

Most farm and horticultural holdings are eligible for grant on the items listed in Section A of Appendix 1, Part I, provided that they are run as commercial businesses. Some activities which DO NOT ATTRACT GRANT are listed in Appendix 2.

Businesses which are able to meet the sufficient employment test can claim grants on a wider range of items; these are listed in Sections A and B of Appendix 1, Part I. To qualify, a business must provide enough work per year to occupy a skilled worker for at least hours a year, but see Appendix 3 (sufficient employment).

Businesses which are able to provide "sufficient employment" from horticultural produce alone are eligible for grants on yet more items — all those listed in Sections A, B and C of Appendix 1, Part I. Crops which are considered as horticultural produce are listed in Appendix 3. You should note that these crops are eligible only if they are sold fresh by the enterprise.

Co-operative businesses can also claim Investment Grants subject to the same eligibility tests as apply to individual enterprises. Grants are also available to co-operatives through the Central Council for Agricultural and Horticultural Co-operation.

4. WHO MAKES THE CLAIM?

Anyone can claim grant on eligible items provided that the bills have been paid. If two or more people (e.g. landlord and tenant or partners) have each spent money they can make a joint claim.

5. WHAT ARE THE GRANT RATES?

There are two levels of grant for most eligible items; the standard rate and a higher rate available only to those businesses in the less-favoured areas whose income is below a certain level. Standard and less-favoured area (LFA) rates are set out in Appendix 1. Guidance on eligibility for the LFA rates is given in Appendix 4.

6. WHAT ARE THE FINANCIAL LIMITS?

Minimum Eligible Expenditure

The minimum eligible expenditure to attract grant is £500 although this can be made up of several items. Claims are also subject to a maximum amount per Labour Unit and per

HISTORY AND LIFE CYCLE OF A DHSS FORM

THE NATIONAL INSURANCE ACCOUNT NOTICE AND EXPLANATORY LEAFLET

Introduction

1. We were asked to include within our report a history of the development of a DHSS form and a summary of its life cycle. We selected the National Insurance Statement of Account (the form RD20) and its associated explanatory leaflet (Leaflet RD20A). The design and content of these two forms were considered in detail in Chapter 8 of the main Report. We selected the form for consideration here for these main reasons:

a. The form has a high use rate. Nearly a million are sent out annually. Taking into account the forms, computer time, staff time, envelopes and postage, the total cost is in the region of £140,000 excluding follow-up action.

b. Issue in most cases is automatic. Few contributors understand or want the forms and so we thought it useful to try to establish the considerations which led to it being introduced.

c. The form is issued by computer process. It seemed worthwhile to consider the extent to which computer requirements placed a limitation on forms design. DHSS is a high user of computer produced forms and therefore there might be general lessons to be applied.

2. National Insurance arrangements were successively considered by different Governments from the late 1960s and consideration of a computer-produced Statement of Account began as early as 1971. Proposals changed slightly with different schemes.

Design history

3. i. Mid 1971-1972 - preparation of first draft

The first draft was prepared by the Graduated Pensions Branch at Newcastle who had experience of statements relating to that scheme. The first draft of the RD20 statement took some account of what was existing administrative practice at the time and was not an entirely new design.

ii. July 1972 - circulation of first draft

The draft copy (specimen at Annex 1) was circulated widely in DHSS. This was a particularly important circulation. It largely set the pattern for the form which was eventually issued in 1977. Design and content changes made afterwards were minor, with one exception.

iii. February/March 1973 - second draft prepared and circulated

Comments on the first draft were almost all concerned with technical accuracy and comprehensiveness of the information. About 50 different people received copies, and many others woul also have considered it. The named recipients would have circulated the material further. No single request was found for material to be removed although there were often pleas for simpler language, but made in terms that comprehensiveness coul not be sacrificed one jot. Only the Department's Information Division questioned whether the form could be understood. They said:

> "It is essential that statements, explanations, notes and leaflets should be as clear and as straightforward as we can possibly make them. We cannot assume that the reader will know anything about the system..... We appreciate that this [the version circulated] is only a draft, but we feel that some improvement must and could be made in the design. HMSO has a special Unit concerned with the design of forms. We have seen examples of their work and it is impressive. Certainly there would be nothing to lose and probably much benefit in seeking their advice."

They were ignored. The form was never considered by professional design staff at any stage.

iv. April 1973 - apparently final version

The next version was a compromise. It did not fully satisfy everyone but the scheme had reached the stage at which it was imperative that the form should be finalised. Objections were therefore put aside. The version produced is at Annex 2.

The new Government elected in 1974 proposed a different scheme and the form had to be reconsidered again.

v. 1974/1975

The process was much as before. The form which had been prepared was used as a basis for a new one.

vi. 1976 - design crisis

The form produced in 1975 was held back from printing until Parliamentary approval of the pensions scheme was given. It was discovered at a late stage that the form could not be used with a new style window envelope. It was vital that it should. The alternative was to have the form in a plain envelope which would then require individual addressing at very large cost in terms of time and manpower. The design solution was to fit in the address space in the middle of the form and re-position the textual material around it.

The form was then printed and issued to the public in 1977.

Comments on design process

4. Policy consideration and design were not separate processes. There was in fact no distinct design stage and no professional design expertise was used. The content of the form was laid down by policy and operational requirements rooted in the belief that, whatever else, the statement must be comprehensive and accurate.

5. We do not want to give any impression that consideration of the form was cursory. Nothing could be further from the truth. A great deal of time and consideration was given to the form, often by very senior officials. Drafts were circulated and considered by Assistant Secretaries and above and very seldom to an individual below Principal level. A vast array of expert technical knowledge about national insurance was applied to the form.

THE EXPLANATORY LEAFLET - RD20A

6. Work on the leaflet went on alongside the form but its preparation was greater. Information Division were asked to put the leaflet in simpler language on the basis of a draft supplied by policy branches.

7. The various stages of preparation were very similar to those relating to the form. Stages of consultation, drafting, re-consultation, re-drafting and eventually agreement on a final version were gone through. Greatest attention was given to comprehensiveness and accuracy.

8. Although Information Division were involved they were not able to get a simple text agreed. Their drafts were subject to much adverse comment because they failed to meet administrative requirements regarding accuracy and comprehensiveness. The basic argument is summed up in this extract from a minute written by an adminsitrator.

> "In Information Division's version, not only has the substance of our draft been diluted and over-simplified, but the change of style has introduced many inaccuracies..... I do not deny Information Division's right to present the finished version in the style they choose or their undoubted prerogative to edit. However, I do not consider without technical expertise they can be allowed to question the inclusion of certain material or to expect an originating Policy Branch to comment favourably on a draft that is so dissimilar to the original..... I am as concerned as the next man that the finished product should be readable by the general public, but not to the extent of sacrificing the comprehensive though technical nature of our draft."

PRODUCTION OF THE FORM

9. The form RD20 is pre-printed computer stationery. The computer prints on it the details relevant to the individual contributor. The diagram which follows indicates the stages of production. The form was tested only in the sense of a "dry-run" being made through the computer to see that positioning and layout were correct for the computer's requirements. There was no testing of either the form or leaflet with the general public before issue.

PERSONAL

Mr RICKETT

Govt Mach

22/12

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

You may like to have advance warning of a submission by Sir Derek Rayner on this subject. I attach for this purpose a copy minute to him, with its accompanying documentation.

2. Needless to say, comments would be welcome, provided they are not too rude.

C PRIESTLEY
18 December 1981

Encs: As indicated

cc Mr Cassels
Mr A W Russell

Sir Derek Rayner

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

1. I attach a letter to Lady Young, covering a minute to the Prime Minister introducing your summary and report and offering a draft minute from the PM to Ministers in change of departments. These drafts are based heavily on work by Mrs Thoms.

2. Your own report is now virtually complete. We await only the comments of a few departments in response to Mr Cassels's recent letter to Permanent Secretaries. When all are in we shall produce a fair copy of the text for submission to the PM.

3. Mr Russell, Mr Grant, Mrs Thoms and I have discussed the central team's treatment of the volume and cost of forms in their report. Mr Grant and his colleagues are now working to substitute a number of costed examples for the present rather broadbrush discussion of the cost of handling completed forms once returned to the originating department. The central team's report therefore remains a step or two behind yours but this need not delay your own submission any further.

4. It would be good to get a letter to Lady Young on Monday with a view to a submission before Christmas if possible and by the end of the year if not.

CP

C PRIESTLEY
18 December 1981

Encs: Letter to Lady Young
Minute to the Prime Minister
Draft Minute from the PM to Ministers in charge of Departments
Summary of reports on the Review of Administrative Forms
Review of Administrative Forms: a Report by Sir Derek Rayner

CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS Telephone 01- 233 8224

December 1981

The Rt Hon The Baroness Young

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

1. The Prime Minister asked me in January to review and report to herself and the then Lord President on administrative forms.

2. I attach a copy of what is very nearly the final version of my report. Mr Cassels has asked Principal Establishment Officers to check that references to their departments are correct; amendments are being taken on board now. He has also sent a summary of the report to Permanent Secretaries. I should like to get my report to the Prime Minister by the end of the year.

3. I also attach the minute I intend to send to the Prime Minister covering both the report and a summary of the exercise as a whole. Forms' quality is pretty patchy but there are some good stories to tell and I have stressed the importance of telling them well. A White Paper and an exhibition seem a good way of doing this, provided the press is well softened up first. I hope that you concur with my proposals, not least on MPO's role in leading and co-ordinating the drive for better forms.

4. Some hard work has been done on my behalf by the central team, both in co-ordinating the review and also in drawing up guidelines for managing and controlling forms. These should result in improvements right across Government. The team's members came from Management Development Division and were Malcolm Grant, Margaret Exley, Tim Lonsdale and Ian Goddard.

5. I am copying this letter to Robert Armstrong and John Cassels.

Derek Rayner

PRIME MINISTER

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

1. I submit herewith my report on the Review of Administrative Forms which you commissioned last January. The report is quite short, but you may find it helpful to look first at the separate summary which immediately follows this minute.

2. The review consisted of

- 8 scrutinies in departments; and
- the examination by a central team of the arrangements for managing and controlling forms.

3. I propose the following action to carry the review through to a conclusion. Lady Young has seen what follows and agrees.

Informing Ministers

4. Forms are a way of doing work. They are usually part of a bigger process; they rarely stand on their own. Typically, they bring information from the citizen or the firm to the desk of an official which he or she needs in order to assess them for taxation, pension or grant.

5. This review has tried to show, by example, what can be done to increase the intelligibility, accuracy and economy of forms and to reduce their number.

Recn. 1

6. All departments use forms but only eight took part in the review. Therefore, I recommend that you circulate the report to all Ministers in charge of departments. This would provide the opportunity for you to encourage the Ministers who took part to get ahead with implementing the recommendations

made to them where they had not yet done so and to ask all Ministers to take part in the drive for fewer and better forms. I attach a draft minute which you (or Mr Whitmore on your behalf) might send to them with a copy of the summary.

Informing Parliament and the Public

7. The picture painted by the review of control over and the fitness of forms for their purpose is not all that rosy but there are some good stories: notably DHSS and the Revenue Departments are doing some fine work. The report suggests (paras. 49 - 86) a strategy for making the good form the rule rather than the exception. The strategy is summarised in
Recn. 2 para. 25 of the summary. I recommend that this strategy should be set out in a White Paper. You will no doubt want to look to Lady Young for advice on the content and timing of the White Paper, but my own initial view is that it might sensibly consist of the attached summary; a statement of what the Government is going to do; and, perhaps as an annex, a note on the results of the Departmental reviews.

8. A White Paper on forms would of course get a lot of publicity. If the press were well-briefed beforehand, I think much of this could and should be to the Government's advantage. Here, too, you will want to look to Lady Young and Ministerial colleagues for advice. One thought you and they might like to consider is that publication should be accompanied by an exhibition, rather like the one you had in No 10 this time last year, showing practical examples of how forms can be made better in a way that can be well photographed for reproduction in the press.

Keeping up the pressure

9. Getting better and fewer forms calls for a new approach to working methods rather than the control of something which
Recn. 3 is finite and measurable in its own right. I recommend that the Management and Personnel Office should help departments to

implement the review's recommendations and also promote best practice. You might wish to call on MPO to report to you and Lady Young on progress in about a year.

Acknowledgements

10. I gladly acknowledge the work done by the central team from MPO (Mr M H Grant, Miss M Exley, Mr T L Lonsdale and Mr I F Goddard) and by Mrs E Thoms in my own office in co-ordinating the review on my behalf and developing guidelines for controlling and managing forms in departments.

11. I am also grateful to Ministers and their senior officials for their co-operation and to the members of the departmental teams.

12. I am copying this to Lady Young, Sir Robert Armstrong, Sir Douglas Wass and Mr John Cassels.

Derek Rayner
December 1981

Encs: Summary of reports on the review of Administrative Forms
Review of Administrative Forms: Report by Sir Derek Rayner

DRAFT PERSONAL MINUTE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO ALL MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF DEPARTMENTS

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

1. Sir Derek Rayner has submitted his report on the review of administrative forms which I asked him to undertake last January. In enclose a summary of his conclusions and a copy of the report. Eight departments took part in the review and I am grateful to the Ministers concerned for their co-operation.

2. The departmental teams looked at a small number of forms, aiming to show by example what can be achieved across the board. The results were good. Of the [ ] forms examined, [ ] kinds were recommended for abolition and [ ] for redesign. This would mean [ ] fewer forms being issued by government. Ministers' responses to the teams' recommendations have so far been vigorous and I hope that it will continue to be so. Across central government as a whole, we should now move on to making all forms in all departments as good as they can be.

3. Because our forms affect every family and business in the country, I propose that we should publish our strategy for getting fewer and better forms as a White Paper. It would comprise Sir Derek Rayner's summary; a statement of what the Government intends to do; and a summary of the departmental exercises. Publication would be accompanied by an exhibition showing some of the very good work which departments are now doing.

4. I have invited the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to consult colleagues on the draft of a White Paper as soon as possible.

5. I am copying this minute to Sir Derek Rayner, the Joint Heads of the Civil Service and Mr Cassels.

MHT

SUMMARY OF REPORTS ON THE REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

What is an "administrative form"?

1. An administrative form is a means by which the citizen or the firm on the one hand and the Government on the other talk to each other over an immensely wide range of business. For example, a household will deal in the course of a year with forms like the Income Tax Return and the renewal of the TV Licence and Vehicle Excise Duty on a car.

2. An administrative form is not about statistics, therefore. It is usually a part of a scheme of administration, as various as collecting taxes or awarding grants. It is a mechanism which connects the Government and the citizen or the firm.

3. The Government form is a common feature of modern life. Some that I have seen are an admirable practical expression of a democratic Government's wish and duty to serve and inform the citizen well. Others, less praiseworthy, seem to be the practical expressions of a remote officialdom. All are a sign of the vastness of central government administration.

4. The growth of Government over the years, and its present scale, may be pertinently contrasted with the early days of the welfare state. Lord Salter recalls* the intimacy with which top officials in the new welfare administration were involved in ensuring that it made sense outside Whitehall; the steps taken to explain the National Health Insurance Act 1912 to the numerous Friendly Societies through which it would be administered included one "rather ingenious device". This was to choose an ordinary mortal as the editor of all circulars:

> "It was his task to read them at the last stage before actual issue, and to refer them back to the branch of the office which was responsible for the draft if there was anything not immediately intelligible to him. It

* Memoirs of a Public Servant, Faber & Faber, 1961, pp 36 & 67

was a severe, but salutary, test for the specialised official."

5. Too few forms now in circulation seem to have been submitted to a similar test.

What was the review about?

6. The review aimed at identifying burdens imposed by administrative forms and at recommending how they should be reduced. The review could not cover every single form in use, so the method adopted was to scrutinise a sample in eight departments; to examine the existing arrangements for controlling the cost of producing and using forms and for making them more effective; and to build on the good work already being done, for example in HM Customs and Excise, the Department of Health and Social Security and the Inland Revenue.

7. The review therefore dealt with:

(1) Forms which go chiefly to individual citizens (examined by departmental teams in the Home Office, Inland Revenue, Department of the Environment and Department of Health and Social Security).

(2) Forms which go chiefly to businesses (examined by departmental teams in HM Customs and Excise, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Department of Transport and the Department of Employment).

(3) Arrangements for controlling and managing form in all main user departments (examined by a team in the then CSD, now the Management and Personnel Office).

8. The sample examined included 86 kinds of form. The teams recommended that 32 of these should be merged with others or withdrawn and 35 more should be redesigned. The Central Office of Information and HM Stationery Office produced some first-class redesigned forms.

9. I summarise the review's conclusions and recommendations as follows.

How many forms are there?

10. Hard facts are difficult to come by. Departmental teams could not find out how many forms their own departments had in use or even the usage rates for those forms they examined. It is therefore a matter of best estimates.

11. Before the review, the best estimate of the number of types of forms in use by government departments was 100,000. But the departmental teams have shown that their eight departments alone have at least that number themselves.

12. The central team's best estimate of the number of forms issued by the Government each year is very high - 2,000 million, or 36 for every man, woman and child in the country.

How do the costs and benefits of forms compare?

13. Here too the facts are in short supply.

14. The benefit of forms is easy to surmise. The review shows that certain forms can be abolished, but there is no doubt about the value of a good form. It allows information to be conveyed and obtained more accurately and concisely than could be done without it. This helps administration to work efficiently and fairly.

15. Forms require expenditure by both Government and the form-filler. The cost of forms to Government is plainly sizeable. If there are indeed 2,000 million forms in circulation each year, and if each costs only ten pence just to issue this alone would cost the Government £200 million. Forms are indeed big business.

16. Within Government, forms have a "production cost", for designing, printing, storing and distributing forms to their point of use. They also have a "cost in use", ie staff time spent in issuing the form and checking on its return that it

had been correctly completed. For example, the MAFF report estimated that each capital grant from costs just 2.37 pence, whereas sending it out, checking it and following up queries costs £4.07.

17. The cost to the form-filler is especially intractable to calculate and I myself would not presume to value people's private time too nicely. Large firms can count the cost in cash terms fairly readily. For small firms and the individual, it may often be a case of "time means money" but more commonly perhaps of the exasperation and frustration will follow on the heels of an initial distaste and reluctance combined with an inability to understand.

18. I would not claim too much for calculations in this area, but the DHSS team produced a most interesting illustration. They suggested that forms in use in their Department, which have an annual production cost of about £10 million, represent a true cost to the community of over £200 million a year. This means that an overall improvement of only one percent in the effectiveness of DHSS forms would save the community over £2 million a year.

19. In sum, bad forms cost money. Staff must spot wrongly completed forms and send them back. They must spend time dealing with queries where people do not understand. The form-filler also wastes time and money struggling to understand and complete the form.

Where do forms come from?

20. The law rarely specifies forms in detail. It is the policy and operational branches in departments which have the main voice in whether a form should be produced, what its content should be and how the information it contains or the questions it asks should be presented.

21. Branches are anxious, naturally and rightly, that their Minister, their Department and they themselves should not be adversely criticised for failing to inform the public or business of their rights and responsibilities. But this tends to make self-protection one of the commonest characteristics of the Government form.

22. Some departments have recently put increasing effort into improving forms but forms design, and indeed forms work generally, remains a low status activity in most departments.

How do forms go wrong?

23. I believe that there is a mismatch between the good intentions of officials and the performance of their forms. Officials would be horrified to be thought careless or discourteous, but the teams' findings suggest that all too often forms do not put the form-filler first. The main points seem to be these:

(1) To a large degree, the way forms work in practice is taken by departments on trust. There is little "pilot testing" of new forms. Generally, forms are a tract of administration which is submerged from the view of Ministers and higher management.

(2) Many officials, particularly those in lower and middle management levels, see forms as unimportant or trivial. Some doubt whether it is right or necessary to communicate with the public in simple language. Work on forms design and improvement lacks prestige.

(3) The direct and indirect costs of forms are not considered when they are introduced.

(4) The language used in forms can be legalistic, lengthy and intimidating.

(5) Forms are too often hard to understand. Sometimes officials themselves do not understand the forms they send out or the procedural instructions associated with them. The computer may have a

bad influence in this respect. And there are too few pointers to the form-filler of where he might get help.

(6) Error rates of over 30%, either by staff or the public, are common.

What should be done now?

24. The Government's general aim is that each department should have a policy for excellence in administration. The principal objectives of such a policy should include having as few forms and as successful forms as possible.

25. In practice, this means:

(1) Recognising that a form is only part of a piece of administration. It does not exist in its own right and should not be managed or controlled as though it did. But forms are both the face and voice of Government for many and they do deserve special attention.

(2) Seeing the policy for forms as part and parcel of the Government's wider policies for economical and effective administration, including the delegation of increased responsibility to line managers. Indeed, the forms policy will be progressively supported and assisted by other work already in hand, notably on the identification and control of running costs.

(3) Recognising that getting good forms is a practical job. It means, for example, policy and operational staff getting away from their desks and finding out what form-fillers make of the paper Government puts out. It calls for determination, knowledge and

imagination by the senior management, line management and the Principal Establishment Officer in each department and, at the centre, from the Management and Personnel Office.

(4) In general terms, the most important thing is that the Permanent Secretary in each department lays on his policy and operational branches the responsibility for good administration, including forms, and that he checks regularly that his policy is in fact being implemented.

(5) In more specific terms, it includes:

(a) Looking first at the largest-issue forms or at the most heavily forms-based procedures of the department, since it may be impossible to do everything at once and it is wise to begin with forms and procedures of a substantial kind.

(b) Making branches responsible for forms also responsible for establishing and justifying the cost of new forms and appraising existing forms. The costs of forms to the form-filler should, equally, be assessed and justified wherever it is possible to do so.

(c) Calling for an annual report to the Permanent Secretary from the Principal Establishment Officer on the state of forms in the department. The PEO, on behalf of the Permanent Secretary, should arrange a progressive review of particular forms and procedures with line branches.

(d) Ensuring that, progressively, forms meet basic requirements of clarity, intelligibility and comprehensiveness. This is a responsibility to be shared between branches, design units in the department and others, notably the Central Office of Information and HM Stationery Office.

(e) Providing, according to the scale of the department, an official or team of officials to help the PEO and advise and encourage branches on forms control and design.

(6) The Management and Personnel Office should designate an officer as responsible for keeping up with the pressure for getting better, fewer forms; helping departments and encouraging them to learn from each other; and improving attitudes to forms through training.

Is that enough?

26. An occasional ruthlessness will be salutary. As a result of seeing for themselves, top managers should tear up some forms in the interest of better administration. But the main need will be for a steady and sustained determination to have as few forms as absolutely necessary and to make them excellent for their purpose. This will not be achieved over night. So the example shown by Ministers and by top managers in getting the work going and in sticking at it will be critical to the success of the policy.

Derek Rayner
December 1981

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

REPORT TO THE PRIME MINISTER

PREFACE

1. You agreed in January that the then Lord President should commission a Government-wide review of forms and that I should co-ordinate it. This report is to inform you of the outcome of the review and to make recommendations for getting fewer and better forms in the future.

2. Eight teams of officials examined the forms issued by their departments. Their names are listed in Annex A.

3. The review was co-ordinated on my behalf by a central team of officials from the then Civil Service Department. They were Mr M H Grant, Miss M Exley, Mr I F Goddard and Mr T L Lonsdale who are now members of the Management and Personnel Office (MPO). I was greatly assisted by Mrs E Thoms, a staff officer in my own unit.

4. As well as advising and guiding the departmental teams, the central team have examined the arrangements for controlling and managing forms in all the main user departments. This report draws heavily on their conclusions and recommendations. I am grateful to them for all their hard work.

5. I would also like to thank the design staff of the Central Office of Information and HMSO for their valuable contribution in providing some very good redesigned forms, often at very short notice.

6. The total cost of the review is £[ ].

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

REPORT TO THE PRIME MINISTER

INTRODUCTION

1. Departments issue forms on a vast scale - the eight departments in this review some 150,000 different types. Getting good forms takes time - not just because of numbers - but also because the job is about much more than simple words and good design. It usually means looking at the procedures which surround the form.

2. Even when these things are as good as they can be, there is no guarantee that the form will be well received. Business colleagues have passed to me more complaints about forms than about any other topic, but it is often not the form which is the real source of irritation. For example, complaints about VAT returns can stem from a reluctance to pay VAT at all. On the other hand, people getting money from the government (for example farmers claiming grants for capital investments) may be more prepared to fill in long, complicated forms and make little complaint.

3. Irrespective of whether people choose to complain, every form represents a burden to the person who has to fill it in. Many departments have devoted alot of time and effort to easing this burden. For example -

- In 1977, the Inland Revenue set up a Communications Unit which, amongst other things, provides a "plain English" editing and design service for publications, using the knowledge it gains from experts in the field. Through informal contacts with schools, the unit has drawn up a list of words which people often have trouble in understanding and which it seeks to avoid. The Unit has also produced a range of clear and helpful guides. One which I found particularly good is about income tax and school leavers. (a copy is at Annex B).

- In 1978, DHSS commissioned research from the Salford Forms Market (SFM) a welfare advisory group, on supplementary benefits froms. SFM produced a number of redesigned forms which showed the advantages of good presentation and simple language. DHSS has also put in a lot of effort on its own account and last year one of its leaflets [ ] won an award from the National Consumer Council and the Plain English Campaign, a voluntary body which aims at improving official language inside and outside government.

- HM Customs and Excise have also worked hard to improve their forms. One of their most important projects was the radical review of the VAT return in 1978 which reduced the form to a straight forward set of boxes showing how much VAT is due and how much is deductable. Many businesses visited as part of this review said that the new form had made life much easier for them. This year, one of their leaflets, "Filling in Your VAT return", won first prize in the Plain English Awards.

4. The aim of this review was to find out more about the kinds of burden which forms present and to see how they could be reduced.

THE DEPARTMENTAL REVIEWS

5. Four teams looked at forms which are sent to individuals. They were from -

- Department of the Environment (DOE)
- Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS)
- Home Office (HO)
- Board of Inland Revenue (IR)

The four other teams looked at forms which are sent to businesses. They were from -

- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF)
- HM Customs and Excise
- Department of Employment (DE)
- Department of Transport (DTp)

6. To avoid spreading their efforts too thinly, each departmental team chose a small number of forms for detailed study to show by example what could be achieved across the board.

In all, they studied 86 kinds of form. They recommended that 32 of these should be amalgamated with others or withdrawn and that 35 more should be redesigned. Seven redesigned forms were produced. An example of what can be achieved in a short time is the proposed new Criminal Injuries Compensation form which, with a copy of the existing version, is at Annex C.

7. The teams collected evidence by talking to the divisions which initiated forms; to the staff who process them; and to the people who have to fill them in. Some teams conducted personal interviews with form fillers (eg DE, Customs, DTp). Others employed outside consultants to take on this work (eg DHSS, DOE).

8. The teams found that individuals often find forms troublesome because they are hard to understand whereas businesses - at least the larger ones - usually know their forms (having accountants and other staff to support them), but find the sheer volume costly and irritating. Initially the teams looking at forms which go mainly to individuals concentrated on simplifying forms and the "business" teams on getting rid of them. But it soon emerged that effective review depended on both points being covered everywhere.

9. The teams also found that although there are some general rules which all forms should obey (on layout, language and sentence construction), there is no universal template which can be used to get good forms. Forms must be targetted at the people who will fill them in. They need individual attention.

10. If implemented, these recommendations would save departments at least £[ ] which includes 100 posts. There would also be additional savings which the teams were unable to quantify arising from fewer enquiries from recipients and fewer incorrect forms. In all about [ ] separate forms will be abolished.

11. Savings to businesses, where quantified, would total £8 million. But the reduction of burden on individuals (and on some small businesses) cannot be properly measured in money terms. The savings to them would be in personal time and in less irritation.

12. A list of the forms examined, together with a summary of each of the reports and a short account of progress on implementation, is at Annex D.

13. This review has shown by example how forms can be improved. In the sections of the report which follow I have set down my general conclusions and recommendations for getting wide and long-lasting improvements.

WHY FORMS ARE IMPORTANT

14. Forms are the means of putting many policies into practice. Most are connected with money - collecting it (eg the VAT return and the tax return), distributing it (eg supplementary benefit and MAFF subsidy forms) and making sure it goes to the right place (eg national insurance number forms). Others are about regulation (eg nationality applications and vehicle licensing).

15. Forms show the face of government. Bad forms can damage its reputation and leave people unsure about their rights and responsibilities. Forms are also a window onto the policy and procedures behind them. Too many confusing forms suggest sloppy administration.

16. A good form can be a cost-effective way of gathering information. But one which is often completed wrongly is a burden on the form filler and on the department. Information must be sought a second time and more staff are needed to check and send back forms; postage cost rise and operations are delayed.

17. For example, the MAFF team reported that half of the 300 Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance forms which the Taunton District Office receives each year are filled in wrongly. Some can be dealt with by telephone (which means the price of a call and the time of farmers and staff). About 30 need personal visits by an Executive Office (whose time costs nearly £7.00 an hour plus travelling). In the year ending March 1980, there were 9,975 such applications in England. If the 50 per cent error rate applies everywhere, this would mean nearly 1,000 visits each year.

THE STATE OF HEALTH OF FORMS

18. This review has shown that the standard of forms in the areas reviewed is not high. Departments use too much official jargon, too many legal terms and long, complicated sentences.

19. The Inland Revenue's old and new Capital Gains Tax leaflets show what can go wrong and how it can be put right. On business use of homes, the old leaflet said:

> "Where a dwelling house is used partly as living accommodation and partly for business purposes, the exemption applies only to that part of the dwelling house which is used as a private residence, that is to say, to the living accommodation. It is therefore necessary to apportion the gain which accrues when mixed premises of this kind are disposed."

20. The new leaflet prepared by the Inland Revenue Communications Unit says:

> "Do I lose any of the exemption if I use part of my home for business? Yes: you will not be exempt on the gain from the part used only for business purposes."

21. Notes may be separated from questions and put in a different order. The form filler is led into a maze of references. For example, the Inland Revenue report said of the 25 notes on the P70C (an assessment notice) -

> "The sequence in which the notes would need to be referred to ... is: 8, 1 and 2, 10, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 3 and 23, 3, 24 and 25, 26, 4, 4, 5, 6 and finally 7. As the notes are printed on the reverse ... comparison involves an effort of memory.

22. People may not be told what a form is for and so an important form may be ignored. Things then go wrong - either for the department (which may have to put in extra work to chase up lost information or lost revenue - or may lose revenue altogether) or for the form filler. For example, the National Insurance Contribution Statement is issued in some cases when contributions paid in a year are not sufficient to count towards a pension (a copy is at Annex E). But the DHSS team reported that few people know what it is for. As a result, they can lose entitlement to benefits, but not find out until they want to claim.

23. Two forms with different purposes may appear to duplicate each other - again because the recipient is not told what the forms are for. An example of this is the Notification of Redundancy form and the Notification of Intention to Claim from the Redundancy Payments Fund. The first is aimed at alerting Government so that all possible measures can be taken to avert the redundancy. The second is to help the employer avoid making payments which he cannot claim back. But employers see the initial notification as wasteful bureaucracy.

24. The apparent reluctance to explain and inform can also extend to not telling the form filler where he can get help if he needs it. It is assumed that the recipient will understand. No sympathy is shown to the person who does not.

25. The design and layout of most of the forms which the teams looked at was faulty in some respect. The typeface on some was too small (for example, the MAFF capital grants application and explanatory booklet - extract at Annex F) and others were cluttered with too little space to write in answers. Many forms look, and are, unbusinesslike.

WHY FORMS GO WRONG

26. The teams showed that the most common cause of bad forms is that no one looks at them from the point of view of the recipient or thinks what will happen if they are misunderstood.

Sometimes there are practical difficulties -

- Hard-pressed divisions working on new legislation may be reluctant to take time to think about forms.

- The initiator may be trying to protect his Minister from accusations of maladministration and references to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (although the DHSS team reported that - in the view of their Second Permanent Secretary who deals with such cases - the PCA took a robust and common sense line on the need for simple forms).

- More than one group of staff may have an interest in the form. For example, in the Inland Revenue, the policy division which sets up a new tax or allowance is separated from the management division which works out how to operate it. Both are separate from the technical division which advises on where it fits into the tax

structure, and from the local offices which are issuing and processing the forms. Their Communications Unit has been successful in lifting forms out of the gaps, but other departments do not have a unit of this kind to rely on.

- The initiator may simply be trying to give the citizen the fullest possible account of his rights and responsibilities.

27. Whatever the cause, the result is usually to err on the side of caution. So the form ends up with slabs of original legislation, declarations and threats of penalties and much more detail than the average person either wants or needs.

28. Another very important cause of complicated or unnecessary forms is that the procedures behind them are cumbersome. Even if the scheme is good to start with, as new problems arise or in trying to get more refinement, new rules are laid down and new questions added to the form. Every recipient is confronted with every question even though many questions do not apply.

29. The DE report points up a very telling example of how efforts to be consistent between the different pieces of legislation can lead to complications. The Redundancy Payments Scheme is operated on the basis of a 52 week rather than a calendar year because this was the basis of the earlier Contracts of Employment Act. As a result employers must use a special calendar (form RPL4 which shows the dates of the first and last days of every week since 1961) to work out what some of their employees are entitled to. An extract from the notes on use shows how forbidding the RPL4 is:

"(1) Find the relevant date, (ie the date up to which service is reckonable) in the left hand column. This will be the Saturday following the date of termination, or the actual date of termination if that is a Saturday.

(2) Round up the number of years' service (ie either for total service or for service since the employee's 22nd or 41st birthday) and select the column headed by that number.

(3) Read across horizontally from the relevant date in the left hand column to the corresponding date in the column selected in (2) above.

(4) (a) Test for total service - If service began on or before the date in (3), the figure at the head of the column shows total years of service. If service began after that date, reduce the figure at the head of the column by 1 year to get total years of service."

30. The team recommended (and the Secretary of State has accepted) that the calculations should in future be based on a calendar year. As soon as the legislation is introduced, the RPL4 will be abolished.

31. Unnecessary forms may also arise where the same information is already collected by some other means. For example the Customs report showed that VAT certificates of posting overlap with the Post Office Customs declaration. The departmental team have recommended that the VAT forms should be withdrawn. This will save 1.5 million pieces of paper a year.

32. All the problems described above are made worse where departments have too few design experts and do not provide clear advice to initiators drawing up a form or reviewing existing ones.

33. The "family history" of the National Insurance Account Notice (at Annex G) shows some of the problems which can arise in trying to get a new form out. It is surprising, but not untypical, that at no point did anyone ask the consumer - the likely recipient of the form - whether it was comprehensible.

34. The stumbling block to putting forms right is a combination of attitudes and lack of information. The DHSS team reported as typical the views of some officials that -

- complicated forms are an unavoidable consequence of administering the government machine;
- form are unimportant;
- simple English is inappropriate coming from a government department;
- simple English means talking down to people.

35. Initiators of forms rarely seek the views of the people (particularly in local offices) who will process them - even though they have first hand experience of the problems. This is a waste of a valuable information about forms and even more important, about how policies work in practice. It is also unfair on operational staff since it is usually they, not the divisions back in HQ, who have the job of dealing with complaints and queries from people who do not understand what is being asked of them.

36. The teams also noted that divisions responsible for forms rarely knew about the number filled in wrongly, the costs of processing and reprocessing forms, the cost of sending them out, the numbers sent out, or whether whether people understood them.

37. The result is a vicious circle. If divisions had information about the consequences of bad forms, it would jog them into making their forms better. But without an interest in getting better forms, they don't seek the information. The only way to get big and lasting improvements is to break the circle.

PUTTING THINGS RIGHT

38. Complicated forms which try to cover every eventuality and which contain a lot of official jargon and legal terms are the easy way out. If systems and procedures are good, they can be made comprehensible. It is not right, and it should not be necessary, for Government to protect itself at the expense of clarity: it is idle to pretend that swamping the form-filler with things he does not understand really helps him to protect his rights.

39. All Departments are different. Some are further down the road than others. There is much to do and the central team's report provides a good basis for improving forms. The Management and Personnel Office has devised a programme for helping Departments help themselves in the way that suits them best. I have set out below what I believe to be the essential task in ensuring that forms are well managed.

40. A form is only one part of a large scheme of administration. Even though it is more on show than the rest, it does not exist in its own right and should not be managed or controlled as though it did. This principle underlies all my recommendations.

41. The first task, whose importance cannot be overstated, belongs to the Permanent Secretary and his senior staff. The Permanent Secretary is responsible for how his Department as a whole goes about its work. This must include forms and the way in which the Department deals with its "customers". If top managers show that they care about the reputation of the Department and continually question the way it works with and the burden which it imposes on the outside world, staff down the line will do the same.

42. Secondly, because there is too much administration and there are too many forms for the Permanent Secretary to supervise all of it himself, the practical responsibility for getting good forms, like responsibility for procedures, is delegated from the Minister to the Permanent Secretary and then down to the policy, management and operations divisions which draw up the forms. It is these divisions - the line divisions - who have, and must accept that they have, the responsibility for making sure that every type of form which they initiate is necessary and as good as it can be.

43. Thirdly, there is, within each Department, a central staff function. On hand to help the line divisions and check on behalf of the Permanent Secretary that the Department is running well is the Principal Establishment Officer and the management services and other specialist staff brigaded under him.

44. Finally, the Management and Personnel Office has the task of developing and promoting best practice in the use of forms right across the Service. I welcome what I understand to be the MPO's policy in this matter, namely to advise and support Departments but not to second-guess them or attempt to do their work for them.

THE JOB OF TOP MANAGEMENT

45. My recommendations are as follows.

46. Top management in Departments, from the Permanent Secretary downwards, should take a personal responsibility for forms as part of their responsibility for procedures as a whole. They should require line divisions to give forms the attention they need and, by questioning any examples of bad forms which they

come across, check that this work is being done properly. They should destroy forms wherever they can. They should make sure that certain fundamental questions are asked of each of their Department's most important forms: "What is it for? What does it cost, not just me, but also the form-filler? What value does it add?"

47. The Permanent Secretary should nominate his Principal Establishment Officer (or one of his senior colleagues) as responsible for reporting to him and to the Minister annually on the state of forms in the department. The report should be collated by the PEO's "forms unit" (see below) and say how many kinds of form there are and how many issued; it should show the numbers of forms which have been improved or abolished, the number of new forms, as summary of complaints and suggestions from the public and from staff and plans for further work. The report might usefully be copied to the MPO's Management Development Division (see paragraph below). Where this material can be present as part of any wider management reporting system which the department may have, this should be done.

48. I believe that it is particularly important that in Departments which operate through local office networks, top management should find out what their local office staff have to say about forms, and, more important, about the procedures of which they are part. In my own experience, there is no substitute for going to the local office and listening and talking to the staff there. Top management should "adopt" at least two offices each of which they should visit regularly, in addition to their other normal visiting. At a lower level, Principals and others who are responsible for administering a scheme should go regularly to local offices to see for themselves what is happening in practice. These visits should cover all procedures relating to the programme and, in particular, to those parts of the process which are not well understood or which cause problems.

49. It might also be helpful to get a sample of officers who deal with forms in a cross-section of local offices to write to HQ regularly (perhaps every 3 months) about experience with forms and procedures. These reports should include any reservations which they or their colleagues have about particular forms or procedures, complaints made by the public and details of forms which are often filled in wrongly. The forms unit (see below) might collate these reports as a service to the Principal Establishment Officer and to the line. The sample of offices and officers should be changed every year or 18 months to keep reporting fresh. But I should make it clear that my own preference is very much for going out from HQ and for looking, talking and listening rather than for additional paperwork.

THE JOB OF THE LINE DIVISIONS

50. My recommendations are as follows.

51. Each Permanent Secretary should give specific responsibility for improving the quality of administration generally, including getting fewer and better forms, to the line divisions which are responsible for administration and for initiating forms.

52. In the Departments which produce most forms, it would probably be unnecessary and certainly too much to expect line divisions to review every single form thoroughly say every 3 or 4 years. The reports show that getting better forms is not a quick and easy job. Ploughing through the whole lot would kill enthusiasm off even before the first round was completed. Divisions should therefore identify the forms which are most important to them and which are in most need of review.

53 A good line division in a well-managed Department will know the cost of administering the tax, grant, service, benefit etc for which it is responsible. Included in this are costs directly attributable to forms. These include:

- printing and procurement;
- storage;
- distribution;
- costs of issuing (including postage);
- costs of extracting information from completed forms;
- costs of sending back and reprocessing wrongly completed forms.

54 Line divisions should identify the potential costs attributable to all new forms; the actual costs of the forms which are in greatest current use; and the costs of other forms as they come up for reprinting.

55 Costing to a fine level of detail will not always be possible, but a best guess is often better than nothing at all.

56 Line divisions should find out how long it takes recipients to complete their forms. When the recipient is a business, line divisions should try to put a cost to the time.

57. Line divisions should keep a record of the numbers of forms they issue themselves or cause to be issued by others; of the numbers and kinds of complaints the forms cause; and the numbers filled in wrongly.

58 I recommend that, taking account of the results of this review and of the data available to him on cost and effectiveness, the Principal Establishment Officers should settle with line divisions a programme of forms review. Such reviews may be of forms alone where that makes sense. Otherwise they should be of administration and procedures, including the forms associated with them. Line divisions, or groups of divisions which

deal with related forms or which all have an interest in one form, should nominate for this purpose someone at Principal level or above to have as one of his/her responsibilities the overall health of their forms.

59. The Management and Personnel Office central team have produced guidelines which will help divisions to choose the forms most needing improvement and put them right. Included in their advice is that:

- forms should say what they are for;
- forms should say where help can be obtained;
- line divisions should consider and cost alternatives to forms (eg a telephone call);
- line divisions should try to imagine the recipient's reaction when asked to complete the form and recognise that forms should inform and enquire in the briefest, clearest way possible.

60. The MPO will shortly be putting these and the team's other guidelines on firms management and control to departments. I believe that their implementation will be an essential part of the drive to improve government forms.

THE JOB OF THE PRINCIPAL ESTABLISHMENT OFFICER AND MANAGEMENT AUDIT

61. My recommendations are as follows.

62. To help line divisions and the PEO with the programme of forms reviews, each Department in whose work with the public or with business forms play a substantial part should have a "forms unit" if it does not do so already. According to the scale on which forms are used, this should be an official

or team of officials in its Management Services Division. It should assist line divisions examine their forms thoroughly; advise divisions on design and technical issues; and do redesign work where this is needed. The MPO should help Departments which are too small to have their own unit.

63. The ways in which forms units are set up and used need not be defined with overnice precision here. I myself think that the functions they could undertake on behalf of the Permanent Secretary in respect of existing forms include these:

(1) Keeping a central record, based on divisional records, of the kinds and numbers of forms issued and of the error rate of the main usage forms. The unit should, of course, know what work line divisions are doing on the form and what they intend to do.

(2) Helping the Permanent Secretary and the PEO ensure that forms are getting the attention they need. But it should be the line divisions which get on with the work of review.

(3) Getting to know and consult the organisations which experience the Department's forms (eg trade associations, Citizens' Advice Bureaux, neighbourhood centres, social services departments, etc).

(4) Receiving copies of letters from MPs and the public complaining about major forms (as agreed with line divisions) so that it can help divisions in replying and note the things which give rise to the most common causes of concern.

(5) Working with other sections of the Department's management audit staffs and with the line where the problems brought to notice look to be rooted in procedures rather than in the design or wording of forms.

64. I recommend that line divisions should consult the unit on proposed new forms. The unit should check that projected total costs have been established (including the likely burden on the form-filler), that all the information is essential and that alternatives to a form have been considered. The forms unit should have the right of objecting to a new form to the Permanent Secretary via the PEO.

65. As a general rule, line divisions should test the reaction of the public and staff to a form before it is introduced, with the help of the forms unit. Where such a test is not possible, only 6 months supply of the form should be printed and tests should be carried out during this time.

66. It should also be a general rule that line divisions should discuss requests for reprinting major forms with the forms unit to establish whether it would be timely to review the form before further stocks were produced.

THE JOB OF THE MANAGEMENT AND PERSONNEL OFFICE

67 My recommendations are as follows.

68. The Management and Personnel Office should be responsible on your behalf, and on behalf of the Chancellor of Lancaster and the Joint Heads of the Civil Service, for keeping up the pressure to reduce and simplify forms across the Government service as a whole. This function might best be discharged by designating a particular officer for the purpose.

69. His/her jobs should include:

- identifying any problems experienced by Departments and commissioning work to solve them

- keeping in touch with research and other new developments on forms design and usage;

- keeping in touch with outside interests (including the Plain English Campaign) which cross more than one Department;

- helping Departments to implement their arrangements for forms management and control; and

- making sure that Departments know about the technical forms expertise available from HM Stationery Office and the Central Office of Information

- reporting to the Chancellor of the Duchy from time to time on progress with implementing the review's recommendations across the service.

70. The MPO should also take the lead in improving attitudes towards forms and improving expertise through training. It should work out training with Departments and the College. This should include, among other things, sessions for Administration Trainees on the importance of forms and how to get good ones.

CONCLUSION

71. The essential tools for doing these jobs are determination, knowledge and imagination: determination that administration shall be excellent, that it shall serve the citizen well and that in achieving these ends radical

questions must be posed and answered in respect of both existing practice and proposals for the future; knowledge of the whole purpose of a scheme for administration, of the place within it of forms and of their cost and effectiveness; and imagination to put oneself in the place of the recipient.

7 . A certain ruthlessness will be necessary from time to time. It is in the nature of any large organisation with which I am familiar for paper to grow over the years, unseen by higher management because they have not regarded it as part of their job to look to the quality of administration in terms of simplicity or cost-effectiveness. This is especially so in Government, where all the pressures of legislation and the Civil Service's honourable pre-occupations with accuracy and with attention to detail place the biggest premium on comprehensiveness. But administration is now a massive and costly industry. Keeping it within the bounds of what the nation needs and can afford means that some forms will have to be torn up.

7 . Tearing things up from time to time is salutary. But there is no real substitute for a policy of excellence in administration. The citizen pays for and is entitled to good government. In practical terms, this means deliberate and sustained measures to improve and reform the quality of administration.

DEREK RAYNER

December 1981

ANNEX A

DEPARTMENTAL REVIEWS - STUDY OFFICERS

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Alan Bennett
Carolyn Morgan

HM Customs and Excise

Denis Edwards
Arthur Wells
David Parr
Sidney Gordon
Alan Robinson

Department of Employment

Maurice Grubby
Kathy Hegarty
Stuart Low

Department of Environment

George Back
Ian Milton

Department of Health and Social Security

John Moyes
John Orr
Tony Bennett
Eamonn Kelly

Home Office

Alan Norbury
Fred Offler
Jeff Black
Angela Underhill

Inland Revenue

Brian Rennie
Teddy Sampson
Robin Green
Eric Bianchi

Department of Transport

George Back
Ian Milton
Chris Westwood
Peter Openshaw
Noel Brock

normally tax your pay under a special arrangement, using what is called an emergency code.

If you do not have another job and you are out of work for more than a month you may be able to claim a tax refund. Follow the instructions on the P45.

I am going to college – do I pay more tax on money I earn during the holidays?

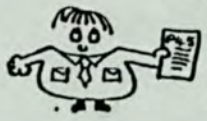
If the amount you are likely to earn during the whole of the tax year is less than the amount of the single person's allowance, tell your employer when you start work. He may be able to arrange with the tax office to pay you without taking any tax. If you pay tax before the arrangement can be made your employer will refund it to you.

How do I know I haven't paid too much tax?

At the end of each tax year your employer tells the tax office how much you have earned and how much tax you have paid. The tax office will check these figures with your PAYE code to see that the tax is right.

If your personal circumstances change at any time, your code will need changing. For instance you may get married, or you may receive extra income, such as interest from a bank account. Tell the tax office at once. Otherwise you may pay too much tax, or be faced with a bill for tax you have not paid.

Remember



1 Make sure you get a form P45 when you leave a job and hand it to your new employer. Otherwise you may pay more tax than you need to.

2 If you do not have form P45 when you start a job, send a coding claim form to the tax office as soon as you can.

3 You will only pay the right amount of tax if your PAYE code is right.

4 If there is any change in your personal circumstances tell your tax office straight away.

If you visit, telephone or write to your tax office always give your reference number and employer's name and address, as this saves time finding your file. In Scotland give your National Insurance Number as well.

If you want any help or advice do ask your tax office or any PAYE enquiry office. You will find the address in the telephone book under 'Inland Revenue – Taxes, HM Inspector of'.

If you decide to become self-employed and to start working for yourself tell your tax office straight away.

Issued by the Inland Revenue, February 1981.

Designed by Angela Slingsby while a student in the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication at the University of Reading.

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Income tax & school leavers

ANNEX B

This leaflet is to help you to understand something about the income tax system and how it will affect you when you start work. It includes some changes which start on 6 April 1981.

IR 33

What is income tax?

Income tax is an amount of money which is taken from your earnings each time you are paid. Everyone who earns or receives income over a certain amount in the tax year will pay income tax. The tax year does not follow the ordinary calendar year from January to December. It begins on 6 April of one year and ends on 5 April of the next year. Our tax system is designed so that as you start to earn more money you will also pay more tax.

What happens to the money I pay?

You pay income tax to help towards the cost of services we all receive in this country. A few examples are the National Health Service, the Civil Service, defence and Social Security benefits. The Chancellor of the Exchequer announces his Budget at the beginning of each tax year. He says how much money he wants and how it is going to be spent. Some of his proposals will affect the tax you pay.

What do I pay tax on?

You will normally pay tax on all kinds of earnings including tips, bonuses and part-time work. If you have invested any savings you will also pay tax on any interest you receive. Some Savings Bank interest is tax-free, and tax on any interest from a Building Society is paid by the Society before you receive it. Some Social Security benefits are taxed but sickness benefit is not. At present unemployment benefit is also tax-free but this may be changed in April 1982.

Does this mean I pay tax on everything I earn?

Everyone can earn or receive a certain amount of income without paying tax. This is called the single person's allowance and you are allowed the full amount even if you only work for part of the tax year. A married man can claim a larger allowance, and if his wife works an allowance is given against her earnings. There are also extra allowances for single parents, the blind and people who support a dependent relative. The total of your personal allowances is the amount you can earn in the tax year without paying tax. It is your tax-free pay.

Can I claim expenses?

The cost of tools or special clothing which you need at work can sometimes be claimed if they are not provided by your employer. You can also claim a reduction for your mortgage interest payments if you are buying a house. But you cannot claim for National Insurance Contributions or for the cost of travelling to and from work.

When do I start to pay income tax?

You will probably start to pay tax when you get your first job. Your employer will give you a simple form which you can sign to say that this is your first regular job since leaving school. He will send the form to the tax office and tell them that you have started work.

Your employer will also give you a coding claim form. This may seem more difficult because it has to be used by other people, some of them with more complicated tax affairs than yours. If you have other income as well as the earnings from your new job, use this form to tell the tax office. Also use it if you can claim extra allowances. This time you can send the form yourself. Your employer will give you an addressed envelope to use. But if you do not mind him seeing your completed claim he will send it for you. If you do not need to use the coding claim form, keep it because it gives information which you may find useful later.

How is my tax worked out?

When you first start work your employer will give you a PAYE code. This code will be based on the single person's allowance and represents your tax-free pay for the year. Your employer will use this code with 'tax tables' which spread your tax-free pay between the number of pay days in the tax year, 52 if you are paid weekly or 12 if paid monthly. On each pay day the tables show the right amount of tax-free pay to be subtracted from your earnings and you only pay tax on what is left.

If for any reason you are not paid for a while, the tax-free pay for those weeks builds up until it can be subtracted from your earnings on a later pay day. If your earnings are less than your tax-free pay at any time then of course you do not pay any tax.

If you use the coding claim form, your PAYE code may have to be changed. The tax office will work out what extra allowances or income to take into account. They will send you a new code and show you how it was worked out. They will also send your new code to your employer who will use it to tax your pay.

What is this PAYE?

PAYE stands for Pay As You Earn. This means just what it says, you pay your tax as you go along. Each time you are paid, the right amount of tax will be taken from your pay, as long as you have the right PAYE code.

What happens if I change my job?

It is very important to get a form P45 from your employer when you leave a job. This is a leaving certificate which shows your PAYE code, your total earnings and how much tax you have paid since the start of the tax year. Remember to keep this form and give it to your new employer so that he can take the right amount of tax. Without a P45, you may well pay more tax than you should.

It is up to you to do something about this by filling in a coding claim form. Your new employer will give you one because you have not given him a P45. The sooner you send your claim to the tax office, the sooner your new employer will be able to take the right amount of tax from your pay. Until then he will

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ANNEX C

Existing and Revised versions of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Form.

CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION BOARD
10-12 RUSSELL SQUARE, LONDON WC1B 5EN
01-636 2812 and 01-636 4201

REF. NO
(For official use)

cicb

EXISTING VERSION

APPLICATION FORM (INJURY CASE)

Please complete all sections of this form — read the Notes carefully and give all the information requested This will help avoid delay. Please use *black* ink. Where necessary please provide your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. PARTICULARS OF APPLICANT

See Notes

a. SURNAME Mr/Mrs/Miss .....
BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE

b. First Names .....

c. Date of birth ..... d. Single/Married/Widow/Widower (delete as appropriate)

e. Address .....
.....
..... Telephone No. (Day time) .....

f. Occupation immediately before the incident .....

2. PARTICULARS OF CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN YOU WERE INJURED

a. Give the date (including year) and time of incident.....19..... at.....a.m./p.m.

b. Where did it take place? .....

c. Give the name of the offender(s) (if known) .....

See Notes

d. Were you and the offender living together as members of the same family at the time of the incident? ..... YES/NO

e. Give a *full* description of the incident in your own words:- .....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

f. Who saw the incident or can give the Board any other information about it? Give names and addresses:-
.....
.....
.....
.....

3. PARTICULARS OF THE REPORT TO POLICE

a. Were the circumstance of the injury reported to the police? YES/NO

b. If YES i. give the date reported and by whom.....
ii. state where and to whom it was reported (give name of police station and/or officer concerned if known)

See Notes

.....
.....

c. If NO give reasons .....
.....

4. PARTICULARS OF PERSONAL INJURY RESULTING FROM THE INCIDENT

See Notes

a. What injury did you suffer? .....

.....

.....

.....

b. Did you receive hospital treatment? YES/NO If YES:

i. give the name and address of hospital .....

.....

ii. state how long you were under treatment:

In-patient treatment from ..... to .....

Out-patient treatment from ..... to .....

iii. give hospital reference number.....

c. Did you consult your own doctor? YES/NO If YES give his full name and full address:

.....

.....

d. Have you received treatment from any hospital or doctor other than those mentioned at b. & c. above?

YES/NO If YES give name and address of hospital or doctor concerned.

.....

.....

e. Did you receive dental treatment? YES/NO If YES give the name and full address of dentist.

.....

.....

f. Have you fully recovered? YES/NO If NO describe symptoms:

.....

.....

.....

g. Are you receiving treatment for the symptoms? YES/NO If YES say from whom:

.....

.....

h. Has the injury left any permanent scarring or deformity? YES/NO

i. What was the period of absence from work? From..... to .....

---

5. PARTICULARS OF ANY EARNINGS LOST

See Notes

a. Have you lost earnings as a result of your injury? YES/NO

b. If YES and you are *self-employed* state your loss. (See Part 5(v) of Notes) .....

c. If YES and you are an *employed person:*

i. what was your average take-home pay including overtime/bonuses, etc., immediately before you were injured?

.....

ii. what payments (if any) have you received from your employers for your time off work as a result of the incident?

.....

.....

iii. give the name and address of your employer(s) and your work or clock No: .....

.....

.....

---

6. PARTICULARS OF ANY OUT-OF-POCKET EXPENSES

See Notes

a. Did you have any extra travelling expenses as a result of your injury? YES/NO

If YES give details and amount .....

b. Did you have any costs for repairing or cleaning clothing? YES/NO

If YES give details and amount .....

c. Was any clothing damaged which you did not have repaired or cleaned? YES/NO

If YES give the following details:

i. *Item*	ii. *Date of purchase and original cost*	iii. *Reason for not repairing and/or cleaning*
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....

d. Did you have any other expenses? YES/NO If YES give details:

.....

.....

---

7. PARTICULARS OF ANY SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS RECEIVED

See Notes

a. What is your National Insurance Number? .....

b. (i) Have you applied to the Department of Health and Social Security for Sickness or Industrial Injury Benefit as a result of your injury? YES/NO If NO please say why not:

.....

(ii) If your injury was sustained in the course of your employment and you are not self-employed have you or do you intend to apply to the Dept. of Health and Social Security for disablement benefit? YES/NO

c. If YES to either of the above give the address of the local office of the Department of Health and Social Security:

.....

d. Have you received Supplementary Benefit since the incident? YES/NO If YES give the address of Supplementary Benefit Commission's Office: .....

.....

e. Have you received Unemployment Benefit since the incident? YES/NO If YES give the address of Unemployment Benefit Office .....

.....

---

8. PARTICULARS OF ANY PENSION GRATUITY OR INSURANCE PAYMENTS

See Notes

a. Have you received any pension or gratuity from your employer(s) as a result of your injury? YES/NO

If YES give details:-

.....

.....

.....

b. Have you received any insurance payments as a result of your Injury? YES/NO

If YES give details: .....

.....

.....

PLEASE DO NOT FORGET TO DATE AND SIGN THE APPLICATION OVERLEAF

9. COMPENSATION PAYMENTS

See Notes

Have you received compensation for your injuries from any other sources e.g. courts, foreign compensation schemes, etc? YES/NO

If YES give particulars: .....

.....

.....

---

10. PARTICULARS OF PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

Have you already applied to the Board before for compensation in respect of any incident? YES/NO

If YES give:

i. Date of Incident..... ii. Date of application .....

iii. Board's reference.....

---

11. CERTIFICATE AND AUTHORITY

See Notes

Please complete the following certificate and authority. If you are applying on behalf of a person under 18 years of age or a person incapable of signing, you should sign in the space provided.

a. The statements in Parts 1 - 10 are true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I undertake to notify the Board of any change of circumstances which may affect the Board's decision as to my entitlement to or the assessment of compensation.

b. I agree to give the Board all reasonable assistance, particularly in relation to any medical reports they may require.

c. I authorise:

1. The doctor(s), the dentist(s), any other person who treated me for my injuries and the hospital(s) I attend(ed) to send the Board at their request a report as to my injuries and treatment.
2. The police to give to the Board all information relevant to my application including a copy of any statement(s) I have made to them and a list of any convictions which may be recorded against me.
3. Any public departments, authorities or agencies in Great Britain or elsewhere from which I receive(d) Social Security Benefits or any other payments whatsoever, to give the Board information relevant to my application.
4. My employer(s) to give the Board information as to my earnings, pension rights and other matters relevant to my application.
5. Any government sponsored training or rehabilitation unit which I have attended to give the Board any information relevant to my application.
6. The Board, immediately prior to consideration of my application for decision or final assessment of compensation, to give notice to any court responsible for enforcing a compensation order in my favour that any outstanding monies received or to be received by the court pursuant to the order should be held by the court until such Court is notified by the Board that I have accepted or rejected the Board's decision or final assessment of compensation.

d. I understand that the Board may notify the authorities and persons mentioned above that I have submitted an application and may inform them of the Board's decision.

Date:..... 19.....

If applicant is under 18 years of age, give name of parent or guardian:

.....

Address: .....

.....

.....

Applicant's own signature:.....

Signature of person applying on behalf of a person under 18 years of age, or on behalf of a person incapable of signing:

.....

Give relationship to applicant .....

Address .....

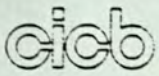
.....

.....

Dd8283954 15m sets 4/81 J.I.H. Ltd.,

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board
10-12 Russell Square, London WC1B 5EN
Telephone: 01-636 2812 and 4201



Please do not write in this space

Reference No.

Application Form

REVISED VERSION

- **Please fill in all the sections of this form. Read the questions carefully and give all the information asked for. Where necessary, please write *Don't know* or *Doesn't apply* or something suitable, rather than leave a blank.**
- **Please use black or very dark ink because it may be necessary to photocopy your application. If you need more space, write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.**
- **Please remember to sign and date the form at the end. If you are filling in the form for someone who cannot do it himself or herself, or who is under 18, you may sign it for them, but please give your full name and address and say what your relationship is to the injured person (for example, parent or friend).**
- **If you are under 18 and you complete and sign the form yourself, you must also ask your parent or guardian to sign and give full name and address.**
- **Please inform the Board immediately if you change your address.**

Experience has shown that these are all points which can cause delay to your application.

1 **Your full name**
Please say whether Mr, Mrs, Miss, etc., and give your family name first. Please write in BLOCK CAPITALS.

Your date of birth
If the injured person is under 18, his or her birth certificate should be sent with the form. It will be returned as soon as possible.

Please say whether you are single, married, separated, divorced, widow or widower

Your address

Telephone number during the day.

2 **When did the incident in which you were injured happen? Give day, month and year, and time**

Where did it happen?

What is the name of the person who injured you?
Please give this if you know it. If you don't know it, the Board may still be able to deal with your application.

Were you and the person who injured you living together as members of the same family at the time of the incident?

As clearly as you can, please describe the incident in which you were injured
If you need more space, use a separate sheet of paper.

Were there any witnesses?
Please give the names and addresses of any people who saw the incident, or who could give any information about it.

3 **Did you or anyone else report the incident to the police?**
If so, please give the name of the person who reported it. If not, say why it was not reported.

If it was reported, on what date was this done?

Who was it reported to?
Please give the name of the police station and the name of the police officer, if you know it.

4 **What injuries did you receive?**

Please note that under the authority you sign at the end of the form, the Board may obtain medical reports from any hospitals, doctors or dentists who treated you. After your application has been considered, and a final award has been made, you can then ask for copies of any medical reports obtained. If you or your representative provide a medical report, the Board will not normally refund its cost; this will only be done in exceptional circumstances and with the Board's prior written agreement.

If you received hospital treatment for your injuries, please give the name and address of the hospital and, if possible, your hospital reference number

How long were you under treatment?
Please give dates for beginning and end of treatment:
As in-patient

As out-patient

If you saw your own doctor, please give his or her name and address

If you received treatment from any other hospital or doctor, please give names and addresses

If you received dental treatment, please give the name and address of the dentist

Have you fully recovered from your injuries? If not, please describe your symptoms

If you have not fully recovered, and it is not known what the outcome of the injuries will be, the Board may award part of the compensation before the final decision can be made, as long as your application is otherwise within the scope of the scheme.

If you are still receiving treatment, please give the name and address of the hospital, doctor or dentist, etc.

It is important that the Board should know if you receive further treatment after you send in this application form, especially if you have to stay away from work or go into hospital. Please write and give details.

Have the injuries left any permanent scarring or deformity?

If the answer if yes, you may be asked later to send photographs, in which case the Board will contribute towards the cost. Please do not send any photographs unless asked.

5 **What was your occupation at the time of the incident?**
Please say what your job was, or whether you were at school, college, etc., or were a housewife, pensioner, etc.

How long were you away from work, or from school or college, as a result of your injuries?
Please give dates.

Have you lost any earnings as a result of the incident?

If you are employed, please give your take-home pay at the date of your injury
This should include overtime, bonuses, etc., but after deducting tax and National Insurance.

What payments have you received from your employers for the time you were off work because of your injuries?

If you continued to lose earnings when you went back to work, because of your injuries, please give details
Please note that there is a limit to the amount of compensation the Scheme can provide for this.

Please give the name and address of your employers and your work or clock number
If you had just started or were due to start a new job when you were injured, please give the names and addresses of both the new and previous employers. The Board will have to check your earnings with your employers.

If you are self-employed, or your earnings are in the form of fees or a share of profits, please state the total loss

In addition, please provide a separate detailed account with this form. You should be prepared, if required, to produce documents to support your claim, such as certified accounts and notices of assessments to income tax.

If you are a student, please give the name and address of your school or college

6 Please give details, including amounts, of any out-of-pocket expenses incurred as a result of your injuries

Extra fares
For example, to hospital for treatment.

Repairs or replacement of damaged dentures, spectacles, etc.
if this expense has not already been met in full by the National Health Service or the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS).

Repairs or cleaning of clothing
List each item. If possible, please send receipts.

If any clothing was damaged which you did not have repaired or cleaned, please give full details
List each item with the date you bought it and its original cost, and say why you did not have it repaired or cleaned. If possible, please send receipts.

Compensation for clothing is based on the depreciated value after cleaning or repair or, if it was not repairable or was destroyed, on its value at the time of the incident.

Any other expenses
Please note that the compensation scheme does not cover lost, stolen or damaged property (apart from clothing, etc.) or stolen money.

7 What is your National Insurance Number?

Have you applied to the DHSS for Sickness or Industrial Injury Benefit as a result of your injuries? If not, please say why not

If you are not self-employed, and the injuries happened in the course of your work, have you applied or do you intend to apply to the DHSS for Disablement Benefit? If not, please say why not

If you have been awarded a Disablement Pension or Gratuity under the Industrial Injuries Scheme, please send the Medical Board's decision with this form. It will be returned as soon as possible.

If you answered yes to either of the last two questions, please give the address of the DHSS office to which you applied for benefit

Have you received Supplementary Benefit since the incident?
If so, please give the address of your Supplementary Benefit Commission office.

_____

_____

_____

Have you received Unemployment Benefit since the incident?
If so, please give the address of your Unemployment Benefit office.

_____

_____

_____

Please note that benefits are deducted in full from any loss of earnings. If you are entitled to claim benefits but do not do so, the Board may still reduce compensation by the full value of those benefits. The Board may refuse to make an award until you have taken reasonable steps to claim benefits for which you are eligible.

8 Please give details of any pension or gratuity from your employers, or payments from an insurance company or similar body, which you have received as a result of your injuries

_____

_____

_____

9 If you have received compensation for your injuries from any other sources, please give details
Compensation payments include compensation orders made by criminal courts, damages received through civil claims, or similar payments from any other source, including foreign compensation schemes. The Board will deduct any amount received in this way from the award they make. The undertaking you sign at the end of this application form will enable you to receive the full benefit of any compensation order made by a criminal court.

_____

_____

_____

10 If you have previously applied to the Board for compensation for injuries received in any other incident, please give:
The date of the incident

_____

The date of your application

_____

The Board's reference number

_____

11 I certify that all the statements I have made in this application form are true to the best of my knowledge, and that this is my only application to the Board in connection with this incident.

I undertake to tell the Board of any changes that might affect their decision on whether I am entitled to compensation and, if I am, to what amount.

I agree to give the Board all reasonable assistance, particularly in obtaining medical reports, if they are needed.

I authorise the following to assist the Board in considering my application:

The police, to give any relevant information, including copies of any statements I made to them and a list of any convictions which may be recorded against me.

The hospitals I attended, and the doctors, dentists and others who treated me, to give a report on my injuries and treatment.

My employers, to give information about my earnings, pension rights and other relevant matters.

Any Government Departments, local authorities or other public agencies in Great Britain or elsewhere from which I received social security benefits or any other payments, to give any relevant information.

Any Government-sponsored training or rehabilitation unit that I have attended, to give any relevant information.

I authorise the Board to ask any court responsible for enforcing a compensation order in my favour to hold any outstanding money received as a result of the order until the Board informs it that I have accepted or rejected their decision or final assessment for compensation.

I understand that the board may inform the authorities and person mentioned above that I have made this application, and tell them their decision.

Signature of applicant

_____

Date

_____

If you are under 18 you must also ask your parent or guardian to sign below and give the information requested.

If you have completed and signed the form for someone who is incapable or too young to do so, please sign below and give the information requested.

Signature

_____

Full name

_____

Relationship to applicant or status

_____

Address

_____

_____

Printed in England for Her Majesty's Stationery Office by Coates Press Ltd. Pre 16429

ANNEX D

SUMMARY OF DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

1. The team looked at forms from two areas -

- the Investment Grant leaflet (AHS2) and claim form (AHS3). They identified a 30 per cent error rate in claims received at one regional office. HMSO produced redrafts of the forms.

- the Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance Form (HCA9). The team found an error rate of 50 per cent on this form and made alternative sets of recommendations for either simplifying it or collecting information in another way.

2. If implemented these recommendations would save MAFF an estimated £[ ] and [ ] hours of formers time.

Progress on Implementation

3. Ministers have accepted the need to reduce the error rates of these forms and work is in hand to do this. This will build on the recommendations in the report.

Customs and Excise

4. The team looked at a wide range of forms taken from the following areas -

- Customs imports. The team examined the CIO/CIOA, CIOX, C91, C105A, C109A, C130, C513, C578, C1204 and the C15. They recommended extensive changes (and shortening) to the C10 which, because this form is a base for the rest of the 'family', would result in improvements to the others as well. Redrafts of some forms were produced. If implemented the proposals would save the department £30,000 pa and businesses £1m - £1.5m.

- personal exports and tax-free car sales schemes (VAT 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 417). The team recommended merging the two categories of tax-free car export (and the VAT 410 and 411) and that VAT 412 and 415 should be simplified and merged.

- VAT Forms. The team recommended that 3 VAT assessment letters (151R, 152R, 152(A)R) should be reduced to one; that two notices of assessment (189 and 191) should be merged; that the main VAT return (100) should be shortened and simplified; that 3 certificates of posting forms (442, 443, 445) be abolished.

- other forms. The team recommended that a duty form (BD106) should be abolished and the CAP export levy schedule (C1226) simplified and possibly merged with other forms.

5. In all, the team examined [ ] forms. They made recommendations for redesigning [ ] kinds and abolishing [ ] kinds. Their proposals would result in approximately [ ] fewer forms being issued each year and would save the department an estimated £[ ] and businesses an estimated [ ].

Progress on Implementation

6. Ministers have accepted all but two of the report's recommendations (for merging the two categories of car export and merging the three VAT assessment letters). The teams proposals will there-fore save [ ] kinds of forms and will mean [ ] fewer issued each year. This will save the department £[ ] and businesses £[ ].

Department of Employment

7. The team concentrated their efforts on three forms associated with the Redundancy Payments Scheme (RP1, RP2 and RP4) and the Notification of Proposed Redundancies (HRI). They made recommendations for combining the RP1 and RP2 and proposed that the basis of calculating redundancy payments should be changed from a 52 week year to a calendar year (thus doing away with the need for the special calendar-RPL4).

8. The team estimate that abolishing the RPL4 would save the department nearly £79,000 pa and employers about £180,000 in processing costs. It would also mean 25,000 fewer forms being issued each year. In addition, combining the RP1 and RP2 forms would result in 150,000 fewer years being issued, completed and processed each year.

9. The report shows clearly that attempts to achieve consistency and equity can often produce complicated procedures and complicated forms. It recommends that greater attention should be paid to the operational implications of legislation at the drafting stage.

Progress on Implementation

10. The Secretary of State for Employment has accepted the recommendation for moving from a 52 week to a calendar year and most of the other recommendations in the report. I am in correspondence with the Secretary of State for Employment on ways of further simplifying the redundancy payments calculation.

Department of the Environment

11. The department commissioned a study from the Salford Forms Market (SFM) aimed at simplifying a small number of forms. SFM decided to concentrate on three forms - the Application for Registration of Fair Rent (RRI) and two letters associated with

it (RR2 and RR2S). They recommended that all three should be simplified and produced re-designed forms. They also looked briefly at a number of other DOE forms (in particular the Right to Buy Claim Form (RTB1) and guidance notes) and indicated ways in which they could be improved.

Progress on Implementation

12. The report on the SFM study suggested that it would not be appropriate to issue the redesigned rent assessment forms as they stand. I am in correspondence with the Secretary of State for Environment on the best way of taking the work forward.

Department of Health and Social Security

13. The team looked at the following social security forms -

- Applications for a National Insurance (NI) Number. The team recommended that one form (CF8) should be simplified and another (CF8A for people under 18) abolished.

- NI contribution rates for women. The team recommended that two forms - one for widows and one for wives (CF9A and CF9) - should be simplified and merged and that the new form should also serve where necessary as a NI application (reducing the issue of CF8s by 50,000 p.a.).

- NI Contribution Statement and Leaflet. The team recommended that the RD20 and RD20A should be simplified and not issued automatically (which would save [ ] forms a year).

- NI Contributions Direct Debit Form (CF351). The team found a 33 per cent error rate and recommended that a standard format should be used.

- Contribution Deferrment Forms. The team recommended that procedures should be changed so that deferment was granted for three years rather than one, thus reducing the number of forms (CF359 and CF379) and leaflets (NP18 and NP28) issued and processed.

- Contribution Refund Forms. The team examined the CF28E, CF28F, CF28(NP) forms (for refunds dealt with by local offices) and the RD505 series (for refunds from DHSS Newcastle). They found design faults, too much jargon and overlap between the forms and recommended a thorough overhaul linked to procedural improvements.

14. In all [ ] forms were examined. The team proposed that [ ] should be redesigned and [ ] kinds abolished. If implemented the report would save the department an estimated [ ], as well as the time of form fillers. It would result in the issue of [ ] fewer forms each year.

15. The team also made detailed recommendations for improving the control and quality of forms in DHSS and proposed a two year review of major forms followed by a programme for improving forms as they are reprinted.

16. Research commissioned from Social and Community Planning Research explored public attitudes to DHSS forms and showed that the public generally found them hard to understand. The report looks at why forms go wrong and makes proposals for putting the problems right.

Progress on Implementation

17. The Secretary of State has accepted all the core recommendations in the report. A forms unit is being set up and a programme for reviewing all major DHSS forms put in hand. Recommendations so far accepted should save [ ] kinds of forms and result in [ ] fewer forms being issued each year.

Home Office

18. The team looked at a wide range of forms in five separate areas -

- Immigration. The team examined 8 standard letters and recommended that they should be replaced by a single application form. They also proposed that a guide explaining the rules should be issued instead of individual letters about particular queries.

- Nationality. The team recommended reducing the 15 application forms to 7 or 8.

- Broadcasting. The team recommended shortening and simplifying the TV licence.

- Criminal Injuries Compensation. The team with the help of COI made proposals for simplifying the application and leaflet.

- Probation Sponsorship. The team proposed that the 40 forms in this area be reduced to less than 20.

19. In all, the team examined 66 forms and leaflets. If accepted their proposals would result in about 35 fewer kinds of form.

20. An important theme in the report is that forms associated with complicated statutory schemes tend to contain a mass of legal jargon. It shows that this confuses, rather than protects the rights of the applicant and can result in extra costs to the department from wrongly completed forms.

Progress on implementation

21. The Home Secretary has accepted all the team's recommendations. The new draft of the television licence is now being discussed with the Post Office and the new Criminal Injuries Compensation forms with the CIC Board (who have proved very receptive to the suggested improvements).

Inland Revenue

22. The team looked at the following forms -

- The P1 tax return. The team made recommendations for shortening the form and making it easier to understand.

- The 11P tax return (for people with more complex tax affairs). The team again made recommendations for cutting back the information requested, partly by using other Revenue sources.

- The R40 and R249 forms for claiming refunds where allowances exceed income. The team questioned whether all the questions were necessary and recommended improvements.

- The P70 Notice of Assessment. The team put forward a new design prepared by Reading University and proposed procedural improvements which would cut down the number of P70s issued and processed by as many as 1.35 million p.a.

23. The team also made recommendations for strengthening the control of forms in the department.

Progress on Implementation

24. All the team's recommendations have been accepted.

Department of Transport

25. The team looked at the 31 types of forms used for goods vehicle operator licensing. They identified underlying complexities in the way the system was administered. They were not able to come to firm conclusions in the time available but suggested ways (including making licensing discs not specific to vehicles) which might simplify the system for both licensing authorities and operators.

Implementation

26. I am in correspondence with the Secretary of State for Transport on ways of taking these ideas forward.

ANNEX E

NATIONAL INSURANCE CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY

1. Statement of National Insurance Contributions recorded as paid for the year

(a) Class 1. As an employed person	(i) amount at the standard rate	£	£	£
	(ii) amount at the reduced rate	£	£	£
(b) Class 2. As a self-employed person	Number of contributions			
(c) Class 3. (voluntary) contributions	Number			
2. Earnings factor derived from these contributions including credits where available (note 1)		£	£	£

SPECIMEN

3. Contributions needed to raise the record for the year ending 5th April to the qualifying level for pension (note 2) £

N.I. NUMBER (note 3)

Please keep this for reference. If after reading the enclosed leaflet and the notes on the reverse of this form you think any entries are wrong or have any queries please contact your local Social Security Office.

RD20 ISSUED

EXPLANATORY NOTES

NOTE 1. Your earnings factor is derived from contributions paid or credited and is expressed as a whole number of pounds. Credits are not awarded if the earnings factor derived from your paid contributions alone equals or exceeds the prescribed level (see the enclosed leaflet) required to count towards retirement and widows pensions. Contributions are only payable on earnings within certain limits and because of this and the possible inclusion of credits your earnings factor may differ from your gross earnings for the year. Class 1 reduced rate contributions do not give entitlement to National Insurance benefits and therefore have no earnings factor.

NOTE 2. If you wish to pay this amount you should contact your local Social Security Office and produce this statement. If you wish to pay by cheque it should be crossed, made payable to the Department of Health and Social Security and sent to your local Social Security Office together with this statement (which will be returned to you). A married woman or widow who has chosen to pay reduced rate Class 1 and not to pay Class 2 contributions in respect of the tax year is not entitled to pay voluntary contributions.

NOTE 3. The number shown is your National Insurance number. It is important that you quote it correctly in all correspondence with the Department and that you give it to your new employer when you change jobs so that he may show it on your deduction card. Failure to do so could result in your contributions not being posted to your account and may affect your entitlement to benefit.

NOTE 4. If you change your address or your name, e.g. on marriage, it is important that you notify your local Social Security Office.

For further explanation of the entries overleaf please read the enclosed leaflet.

RD20 Reverse

EXTRACT FROM CAPITAL GRANTS BOOKLET

business and there are limits to eligible expenditure on pig farms. These limits as they are at the time of going to press (September 1980) are set out in Appendix 9.

Maximum per Labour Unit

A Labour Unit is 2,200 hours (see Appendix 3). The maximum limit per Labour Unit applies to the total of grant-worthy expenditure in the 2-year period ending on the day you make a claim under the new scheme. It takes into account expenditure on which you are claiming grant under this scheme, together with expenditure on which grant was paid under the previous schemes, the Farm Capital Grant Scheme (FCGS), the Horticulture Capital Grant Scheme (HCGS) and the Farm and Horticulture Development Scheme (FHDS) and under the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Scheme. For example, if your claim is received in the Divisional Office on 30 June 1981 the limit will be assessed on that claim and on expenditure on which grant was paid on claims received since 1 July 1979.

Maximum per Business

The present maximum limit per business is in addition to the maximum limit per Labour Unit and applies to the total of grant-worthy expenditure within a 6-year period. For instance, if you successfully claim grant in 1981 on expenditure which reaches the maximum limit, no further claims will be eligible before 1987.

The limit applies to applications made on or after 1 February 1980. It takes into account expenditure on which you are claiming grant under this scheme together with:—

a. grant under the Farm Capital Grant Scheme (FCGS) and the Horticulture Capital Grant Scheme (HCGS) if your application for approval (form FCG2 or HCGS2) was received by your Divisional Office on or after 1 February 1980;

b. grant under the Farm and Horticulture Development Scheme (FHDS) if the initial application (form FHD2) was received by your Divisional Office on or after 1 February 1980;

c. grant under the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Scheme.

Limits to Expenditure on Pig Farms

Intensive pig enterprises are not eligible for grant. To qualify, a pig farm must be capable of producing at least 35% of the feedingstuffs required for its pigs. The farm does not actually have to produce 35% of its feedingstuffs but it must have enough land to be able to do so. When you claim grant you will have to give details about the pigs the business has and the area of usable land. To work out whether you can pass this test please see Appendix 5.

As well as the Labour Unit and the business maximum limits, pig farms are subject to upper and lower limits on expenditure. These limits also apply to the total of grant-worthy expenditure in the 2-year period ending on the day you make a claim under the new scheme. They take into account expenditure on which you are claiming under the new scheme together with expenditure on which grant was paid under the other schemes.

HISTORY AND LIFE CYCLE OF A DHSS FORM

THE NATIONAL INSURANCE ACCOUNT NOTICE AND EXPLANATORY LEAFLET

Introduction

1. We were asked to include within our report a history of the development of a DHSS form and a summary of its life cycle. We selected the National Insurance Statement of Account (the form RD20) and its associated explanatory leaflet (Leaflet RD20A). The design and content of these two forms were considered in detail in Chapter 8 of the main Report. We selected the form for consideration here for these main reasons:

a. The form has a high use rate. Nearly a million are sent out annually. Taking into account the forms, computer time, staff time, envelopes and postage, the total cost is in the region of £140,000 excluding follow-up action.

b. Issue in most cases is automatic. Few contributors understand or want the forms and so we thought it useful to try to establish the considerations which led to it being introduced.

c. The form is issued by computer process. It seemed worthwhile to consider the extent to which computer requirements placed a limitation on forms design. DHSS is a high user of computer produced forms and therefore there might be general lessons to be applied.

2. National Insurance arrangements were successively considered by different Governments from the late 1960s and consideration of a computer-produced Statement of Account began as early as 1971. Proposals changed slightly with different schemes.

Design history

3. i. Mid 1971-1972 - preparation of first draft

The first draft was prepared by the Graduated Pensions Branch at Newcastle who had experience of statements relating to that scheme. The first draft of the RD20 statement took some account of what was existing administrative practice at the time and was not an entirely new design.

ii. July 1972 - circulation of first draft

The draft copy (specimen at Annex 1) was circulated widely in DHSS. This was a particularly important circulation. It largely set the pattern for the form which was eventually issued in 1977. Design and content changes made afterwards were minor, with one exception.

iii. February/March 1973 - second draft prepared and circulated

Comments on the first draft were almost all concerned with technical accuracy and comprehensiveness of the information. About 50 different people received copies, and many others woul also have considered it. The named recipients would have circulated the material further. No single request was found for material to be removed although there were often pleas for simpler language, but made in terms that comprehensiveness coul not be sacrificed one jot. Only the Department's Information Division questioned whether the form could be understood. They said:

> "It is essential that statements, explanations, notes and leaflets should be as clear and as straightforward as we can possibly make them. We cannot assume that the reader will know anything about the system..... We appreciate that this [the version circulated] is only a draft, but we feel that some improvement must and could be made in the design. HMSO has a special Unit concerned with the design of forms. We have seen examples of their work and it is impressive. Certainly there would be nothing to lose and probably much benefit in seeking their advice."

They were ignored. The form was never considered by professional design staff at any stage.

iv. April 1973 - apparently final version

The next version was a compromise. It did not fully satisfy everyone but the scheme had reached the stage at which it was imperative that the form should be finalised. Objections were therefore put aside. The version produced is at Annex 2.

The new Government elected in 1974 proposed a different scheme and the form had to be reconsidered again.

v. 1974/1975

The process was much as before. The form which had been prepared was used as a basis for a new one.

vi. 1976 - design crisis

The form produced in 1975 was held back from printing until Parliamentary approval of the pensions scheme was given. It was discovered at a late stage that the form could not be used with a new style window envelope. It was vital that it should. The alternative was to have the form in a plain envelope which would then require individual addressing at very large cost in terms of time and manpower. The design solution was to fit in the address space in the middle of the form and re-position the textual material around it.

The form was then printed and issued to the public in 1977.

Comments on design process

4. Policy consideration and design were not separate processes. There was in fact no distinct design stage and no professional design expertise was used. The content of the form was laid down by policy and operational requirements rooted in the belief that, whatever else, the statement must be comprehensive and accurate.

5. We do not want to give any impression that consideration of the form was cursory. Nothing could be further from the truth. A great deal of time and consideration was given to the form, often by very senior officials. Drafts were circulated and considered by Assistant Secretaries and above and very seldom to an individual below Principal level. A vast array of expert technical knowledge about national insurance was applied to the form.

THE EXPLANATORY LEAFLET - RD20A

6. Work on the leaflet went on alongside the form but its preparation was greater. Information Division were asked to put the leaflet in simpler language on the basis of a draft supplied by policy branches.

7. The various stages of preparation were very similar to those relating to the form. Stages of consultation, drafting, re-consultation, re-drafting and eventually agreement on a final version were gone through. Greatest attention was given to comprehensiveness and accuracy.

8. Although Information Division were involved they were not able to get a simple text agreed. Their drafts were subject to much adverse comment because they failed to meet administrative requirements regarding accuracy and comprehensiveness. The basic argument is summed up in this extract from a minute written by an adminsitrator.

> "In Information Division's version, not only has the substance of our draft been diluted and over-simplified, but the change of style has introduced many inaccuracies..... I do not deny Information Division's right to present the finished version in the style they choose or their undoubted prerogative to edit. However, I do not consider without technical expertise they can be allowed to question the inclusion of certain material or to expect an originating Policy Branch to comment favourably on a draft that is so dissimilar to the original..... I am as concerned as the next man that the finished product should be readable by the general public, but not to the extent of sacrificing the comprehensive though technical nature of our draft."

PRODUCTION OF THE FORM

9. The form RD20 is pre-printed computer stationery. The computer prints on it the details relevant to the individual contributor. The diagram which follows indicates the stages of production. The form was tested only in the sense of a "dry-run" being made through the computer to see that positioning and layout were correct for the computer's requirements. There was no testing of either the form or leaflet with the general public before issue.

[Blind copies: Mr Rickett
Mr Cassels
Mr Charkham
Mr Russell
Mr King
Mr Grant

CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS Telephone 01- 233 8224

WN 2/12

1 December 1981

Mrs Lynda Chalker MP

Dear Lynda,

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

Thank you for your admirable letter of yesterday; it really is the sort of thing that does me good!

I am very pleased to read that you are accepting John Moyes's core recommendations and to know the spirit in which you and your Department are doing so. I am also more than glad to acknowledge the justice of your point that the team was able to build on good work by DHSS in the recent past: as far as I can see from the outside, some excellent work has been done there which deserves to be widely known. My hope would be that when the report on the exercise as a whole is presented, the MPO would lay on a first-rate presentation to get some of the good news across, including that from your Department.

I am copying this to Janet Young and to your Permanent Secretaries.

Yours ever
Derek

Derek Rayner

LT

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY

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Telephone 01-407 5522

From the Joint Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

Sir Derek Rayner
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
LONDON SW1

30 NOV 1981

Dear Derek

REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

Thank you for your letter of 22 September. I am grateful for your words of praise for yet another excellent DHSS study, and I have ensured that they have been passed on to Mr Moyes and his team. I am glad to hear that you will be making use of the lessons learned about designing, controlling and using forms, and that Mr Moyes has been able to assist on some of the other studies.

I should respond straightaway by saying that I am proposing to adopt the central recommendations (50 and 51) for a central forms scrutiny unit in our Management Services Division, and I have arranged for Mr Moyes and Mr Orr of his team to set it up and get it off the ground during the next six months by preparing an action plan on the study's recommendations by the end of the year and thereafter a review programme and guidance for all Branches, including our Central, Regional and local offices, to rationalise and review their forms and leaflets during the next two years. I would hope that this will produce fewer, better, clearer and simpler forms, which serve their purpose and do not try to give too much information, and also produce significant savings.

In this task they will take account of the points you make, and we will certainly pass on the results to the Treasury and the MPO. I should say that the study team was able to build, as they acknowledge, on a great deal of work that DHSS have done in recent years. For example, the way was well paved by the complete re-writing and re-design of the main supplementary benefits leaflets over the last four years, which included simplification, reduction in length, aiming at the average reading age, consultation with outside experts, gobbledegook scores, pilot testing with the Salford Forms Market and RICA. The team also refer to the good work since July 1979 of our Economy Review Committee in scrutinising bids for printing and saving money, and of our MSC report on better methods of controlling stocks.

A good foundation has been laid. What the new central unit will need to do, through a specific action plan and review programme, is not only to change attitudes wherever in the Department they are not yet imbued with the message of this pioneering work but also to ensure that the forms and leaflets are actually changed in the next two years. We can make a good start on the forms already studied, in consultation with the policy Branches concerned, and in that we will take account of your comments.

E R.

Some of the report's recommendations concern leaflets. You may like to know that we are pursuing vigorously under our operational strategy for this decade the whole question of advice and information to the public, on which we hope to be ready to publish a consultative document in the early part of next year.

Yours ever

Lynda

MRS LYNDA CHALKER

Govt Mach

MAP

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG
01-233 3000

16 January 1981

The Rt. Hon. Lord Soames GCMG, GCVO, CH, CBE.
Lord President of the Council

Dear Christopher

ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

Thank you for sending me a copy of your minute of 18 December to the Prime Minister.

I was delighted to learn of this new initiative and I would be more than happy for you to say that it has my support.

You will also want to know that I should be glad for both the Customs and Excise and the Inland Revenue to participate in the review. As I expect you know, the Revenue has already been praised for some of its work in this direction in the pamphlet produced by the National Consumer Council under the engaging title, "Gobbledeygook"! But I am sure there is still ample room for improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Sir Derek Rayner and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours

GEOFFREY HOWE

Ne B

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

23 December 1980

The Prime Minister has seen the Lord President's minute of 18 December, about administrative forms.

She thinks it an excellent idea to initiate a review along the lines suggested by the Lord President, and she would be happy for him to indicate her strong support for this when writing to the Ministers concerned.

I am sending copies of this letter to Peter Jenkins (HM Treasury), Clive Priestley (Sir Derek Rayner's Office) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

M. A. PATTISON

Jim Buckley, Esq.,
Lord President's Office.

Ack

cc to Geo Mach R-Y
Scrutiny Programme

1.

Prime Minister
Agree that Lord Soames should start a selective review of administrative forms, with your specific authority?
MAP 22/XII.

PRIME MINISTER

Yes please. Excellent, mr

ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS

The review of Government Statistical Services is now completed and Sir Derek Rayner is about to submit his report to you and me. I think it has produced useful savings. I will put proposals to you shortly for a similar service-wide review of supporting services in government Research and Development establishments. But meanwhile I suggest that we could get ahead with a review of forms as a follow up to the statistics review.

I propose three main topics for the review. First, what is the scope for reducing the volume and cost of administrative forms to the business community? Secondly, to consider the scope for simplifying forms and making them more intelligible. Thirdly, to examine arrangements for controlling the issue of new forms and for reviewing existing ones.

Because of the size of the task, we will need to be selective. I suggest we ask two or three departments to nominate teams to consider the first two aspects. A CSD team would tackle the third and co-ordinate the other studies.

The aim would be to reduce on a continuing basis the numbers and increase the effectiveness of forms.

Sir Derek Rayner believes this is the right approach and has agreed to oversee and co-ordinate the work. He will be supported by CSD staff.

We would complete the review by the end of the summer. Sir Derek Rayner will then put to you and me a report setting out his assessments and recommendations. We can then advise on follow-up action.

If you agree, I propose that I should launch the review by writing individually to the Ministers concerned. May I say that it has your blessing?

I am copying this to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and to Sir Derek Rayner and Sir Robert Armstrong.

S.

SOAMES

18 December 1980

Mr PATTISON

MAP

FORMS EXHIBITION

1. Those present:

Sir Derek Rayner
Mr Michael Connolly, accountant, M&S, who got the exhibition together and will introduce it.
Mr John Lane, Deputy Director (Deputy Secretary), Central Statistical Office
Mr Brian Smith, Assistant Secretary, CSD (Management Development Division), who will outline ideas on how to take the themes of the exhibition forward into action.

2. I plan to receive the PM at the Bank Block entrance. The 'phone number there, for late messages, is 273 5477.

3. Mr Lane has provided the following note on progress with the attack on forms so far:

"(1) About 2 years ago Departments were asking businesses to fill in around 3 million statistical forms a year. The previous Administration began a drive to reduce the burden. The effort was intensified by the present Government. About 250,000 forms have been cut so far with priority given to relieving small firms, and this year there is an additional bonus of about 750,000 cut because of the cancellation of the 1980 census of employment.

(2) The Rayner Reports on the Government Statistical Service recommend stricter control over the number of business surveys."

CP

C PRIESTLEY
16 September 1980

E.R.

Prime Minister

This is arranged for Tuesday, 1700 hrs - unless more pressing business intervenes. MAP.

1

PRIME MINISTER

You may have seen a recent article by Chapman Pincher in which he made much of an exhibition of forms assembled by Sir Derek Rayner at Marks and Spencer.

Sir Derek has now moved this into the Old Admiralty Building. It occurs to me that you might be interested to have a glance at the exhibition, which demonstrates the range of statistical material required from Government. Paragraph 6 of the attached note from Mr. Priestley spells out the messages that come from it.

If you are interested in this, you would need about half an hour, and I would arrange for Derek Rayner to show it to you some time the week after next. It might be worth publicising your interest.

MAP

Yes please MT

3 September 1980

Mr PATTISON

FORMS

1. If the Prime Minister visited the exhibition (now housed in CSD's Bank Block just beyond Admiralty House, Whitehall) the plan would be something like this.

a. Going round the exhibition

2. Mr Connolly of M&S and Sir Derek Rayner would show the PM round the exhibition. It consists of some 30 panels, thus:

- Setting the scene (Panels 1- 3)

  Purpose of exhibition; impact of form-filling on a manufacturing group; cost to business to complete 8 selected forms (from BSO and DE)

- Statistics (Panels 4-8) - all for Departments of Industry and Trade

  Three illustrative panels*; two querying value of certain statistics and raising the question whether there is duplication.

- Statistical publication (Panels 9 and 10)

  Timeliness of publication.

- Informing and serving the citizen (Panels 11-13) - Department of Employment

  Is the Government's message to the citizen clear? Illustrative panels.*

- The number, complexity and burden of forms (Panels 14-30)

  Illustrative panels* showing Customs & Excise and Inland Revenue forms and Industrial Training Boards' demands for information.

* These panels show large numbers of forms, but in some cases particular forms are isolated to make a point - not all adversely critical.

b. So what?

3. Mr Connolly and Sir DR would aim to make points on the way round and to cross-refer to the scrutiny of the Government Statistical Service and of such subjects as DE, DHSS and MSC dealingswith the unemployed.

4. At the end Mr B W Smith (AS, CSD) would outline current thinking on how to reduce the number of forms; simplify forms; and control the production and issue of forms.

5. The whole thing should take about 30-45 minutes.

6. For comfort, the total size of the party in the room should be no more than about eight.

CP

C PRIESTLEY
2 September 1980

cc for information

Sir Derek Rayner
Miss Holmes

Mr PATTISON

FORMS

1. Following our brief conversation on the phone about this, I have spoken to Sir Derek Rayner and, on a personal basis, to Mr B W Smith in CSD (who is now responsible for the exhibition) and to Mr Churchill in Sir Ian Bancroft's office (in the absence of Mr Colman).

2. The times at which Sir DR might be available in the week beginning 15 September are asfollows:

Tuesday 16 September: lunch time and afternoon

Wednesday 17 September: afternoon

Thursday 18 September: all day

Friday 19 September: afternoon.

3. I expect these slots to be taken up pretty soon so it would be helpful to know as early as possible whether and when the PM would like to visit the exhibition.

4. You may like to know that I am myself visiting the exhibition in its new location at CSD at 3pm tomorrow, 2 September. If you could spare the time, I think it would be very valuable for you to come along as well. Please let me know whether you would like to do this.

5. I have, obviously, had to tell Mr Smith and Sir Ian Bancorft's office about the possibility of a visit by the PM. I have asked them so far as possible to keep this to themselves.

6. I should pass on to you what I have already said to them, namely:

a. The exhibition in its present form is a relatively unsophisticated assemblage of forms selected from the mass collected by departments for this purpose by Mr Connolly, the M&S accountant who has been doing this work for Sir DR.

b. The lessons to be drawn out of the exhibition - in its present form - are, as you would expect therefore, somewhat mixed. The material on statistical forms makes some interesting points (eg about the extraordinary detail into which some returns go, the rather naive bureacratic thinking which underlies some and the gap between collection and publication which can occur in some cases). Some of the material, however, although presented in a "Look what a lot of paper Government pumps out", fashion might be interpreted by some as showing that Government does its very best to make sure that citizens, including those in

minority groups, know their rights and their duties.

c. Because the collection has been made very much by Sir DR, it would be right for him and Mr Connolly to show the PM round it.

d. Sir DR would undoubtedly want to make the point that the exhibition is not the last word on the subject. CSD officials have been giving some thought to the issue (witness the attached copy minutes exchanged by Mr Pearce and me). It might accordingly be helpful to the PM for the relevant CSD officials to be on hand to explain how work on forms might best be developed.

CP

C PRIESTLEY
1 September 1980

Encs: Copy minutes as indicated.

cc for information

Mr Wilding
Mr Russell
Mr B W Smith

Mr PEARCE

FORMS

1. Sir Derek Rayner has seen your minute to me of 14 August, for which he has asked me to let you know that he was grateful.

2. He agrees that there are three strands of work, as you indicate in your para. 4.

3. He will look forward to having proposals later on. I should say, in case it is helpful to you and Mr Smith, that Sir DR would be more than willing to see you both at a point when you have reached a reasonably firm view about what you would like to propose but before you had worked out a highly detailed scheme on paper. He thinks that this would be useful for him and might be more convenient for you. If, in your absence on leave, Mr Smith would like a word with me about this I am of course at his service.

CP

C PRIESTLEY
27 August 1980

Sir Derek Rayner

6.

To see Pl. All is a sensible approach, but affordability is of course an important factor.

MR PRIESTLEY
CABINET OFFICE

Agreed

c -
Mr Wilding
Mr Russell
Mr B W Smith (o r)

GP
17/8

FORMS

This is intended to bring you up-to-date on where we stand on the clutch of issues which concern the use of forms in government. Mr Allen may have passed on to you the brief progress report I gave him in the course of a conversation while you were away.

2. The forms exhibition assembled by Mr Connolly (M and S) is due to be moved into the Bank Block in OAB next week and will be available for viewing there in future.

Wb 18/8

3. Mr Smith is, I am glad to say, fit for duty again after his injury and I have been able to discuss with him and his colleagues what kind of initiatives we might mount. Apart from involvement in assignments to examine specific problems, MD's role hitherto has been confined to giving advice to departments on request and to promulgating best practice through MS handbooks and through CS College courses.

4. We see three interrelated strands of work which we might now launch, each of which would be pursued through field-work in departments :-

i. Reductions in the number of administrative forms (and leaflets) in use by departments which impact directly on the general public (corporate and private).

ii. Simplifying and making forms more intelligible. This would range over the kind of issues raised in "Gobbledegook" as well as the lessons learned from the Department of Trade study by consultants, and the current work in DHSS on the supplementary benefit and other forms, in collaboration with the Salford Forms Market (also involved in the Plain English Campaign).

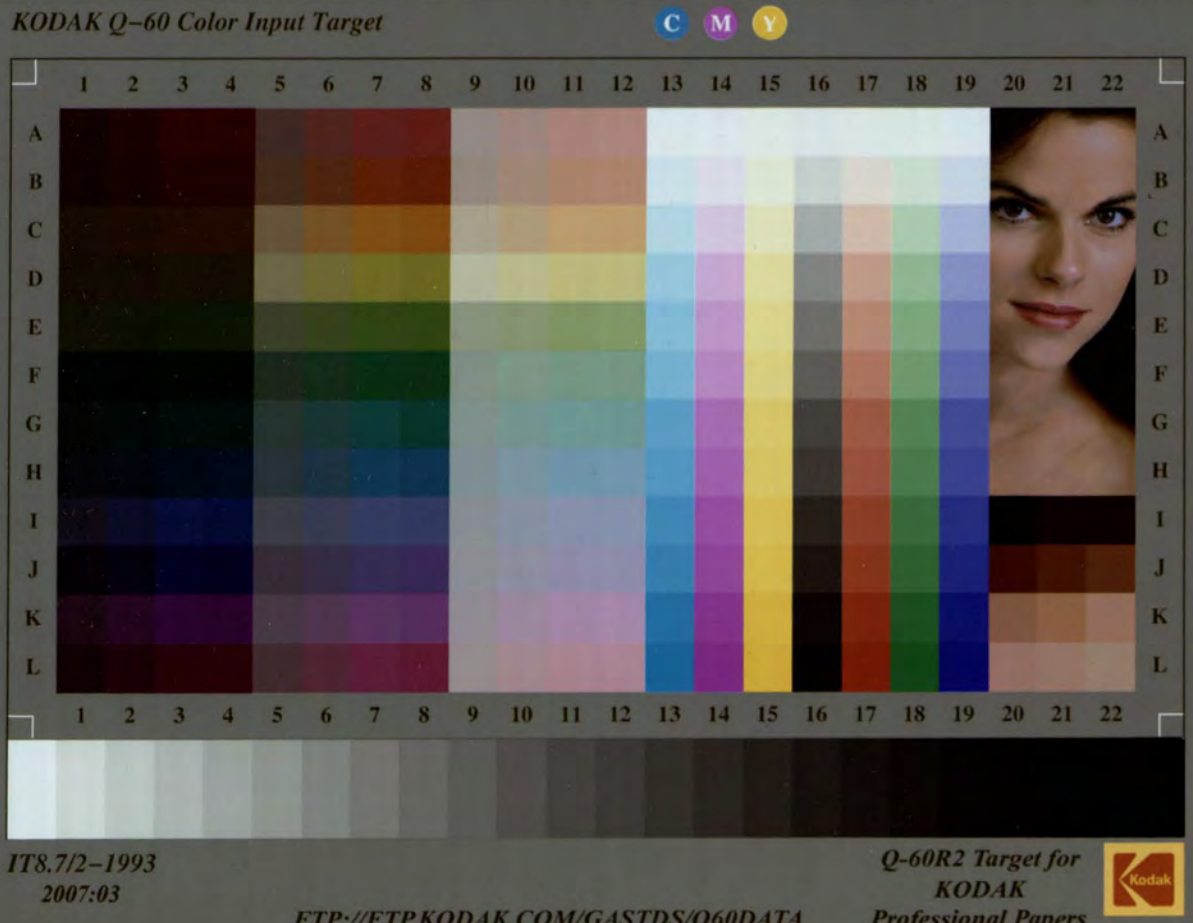
iii. The procedural and organisational arrangements within departments for the effective control of administrative forms. This would enable us to bring up-to-date a similar exercise undertaken by MS(G) in 1978.

5. There are a variety of ways in which these three strands of the study could be carried out, but clearly departments must be closely involved and prepared to devote some team effort. The co-ordination of the study as a whole would be from within MD Division. There are also questions concerning the selection of departments or of areas within them, and the reporting arrangements.

6. I must emphasise that under (a) and (b) we only have in mind, initially at least, probing some limited areas to establish what might be done. Both prudence and tightly stretched resources dictate this.

7. What I should now like to do is to work up some detailed proposals for carrying forward this work along these lines. But since we are in the leave season and some informal consultations will be needed, it is likely to be mid-September (after I return from leave) before we shall be in a position to put firm and detailed proposals before you. Meanwhile, Mr Smith (who is on leave until 21 August) could deal with any queries during my own leave, which is due to start the day he returns to the office.

J B PEARCE
14 August 1980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