

INNER CITIES POLICY GROUP

REPORT

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We recommend that an Urban Renewal Corporation be set up to initiate urban renewal in inner city areas. (para. 5.5)
2. We recommend that local Urban Renewal Trusts should implement urban renewal policies in each city. (para. 5.6)
3. We recommend that the Urban Renewal Corporation should have sufficient Government Funding to enable it to finance the setting up of the Local Trusts. (para. 5.7)
4. We recommend that rating relief should be extended to defined city renewal areas. We propose that all new development should be given rate relief phased over 5 years; additional rates applicable for extensions and improvements would also be phased in over 5 years. We are not proposing that central Government should reimburse local authorities for this shortfall in rates revenue. (para. 5.8)
5. We recommend that the local Urban Renewal Trust's housing responsibilities should include comprehensive estate improvement schemes; promoting improvement grant take-up; assuming management responsibilities of small estates or blocks of flats; promoting take up of right to buy. (para. 6.1)
6. We recommend that there should be a complete review of housing standards and improvement grants and the way they affect inner city housing problems. (para. 6.3)
7. We recommend that Enterprise Agencies should be managed by full-time directors. (para. 7.2)
8. We recommend that Enterprise Agencies should be used to secure and manage small equity investment in new and smaller businesses. (para. 7.3)
9. We recommend that the methods of determining the areas that can benefit from R.D.G. and European Funds are re-examined so as to enable some inner city areas which are outside existing development areas to become eligible for aid. (para. 7.4)
10. We recommend that some of the money at present used for R.D.G. should be re-directed so as to be of more help to smaller businesses and inner city areas. (para. 7.5)
11. We recommend that exemption from D.L.T. should be extended to all developments in the defined city renewal areas. (para. 7.6)

12. We recommend that particular attention be paid to involving black community leaders in the task of encouraging immigrants to set up and expand their own businesses. (para. 7.7)
13. We recommend that I.C.E. (Inner City Enterprises) should give particular attention to the opportunities to improve shopping centres in and adjoining inner city problem areas. (para. 7.8)
14. We recommend that consideration be given to the use of special Department of Education grants to raise standards in inner city schools and the Department and the Inspectorate become more closely involved in the drive to raise standards through monitoring the use of such grants. (para. 8.3)
15. We recommend a radical change in our educational policies so that the teaching of English and British cultural and institutional values and history is given a prominent place in the school's curriculum. (para. 8.4)
16. We recommend that additional nursery education, funded from partnership and programme authority resources should be available to the areas of inner cities with ethnic problems. (para. 8.4)
17. We recommend that partnership and programme authorities should provide resources to enable those members of the immigrant community of all ages resident in this country, who desire to improve their understanding of the English language, to attend special schools. (para. 4)
18. We recommend that school buildings should be the location for a wide range of community activities. (para. 8.5)
19. We recommend that the Home Office should ensure all police forces are aware of and use the methods which have been most successful in achieving the maintenance of peace and enforcement of law. (para. 8.6)
20. We recommend that extra effort should be made to recruit special constables from minority groups through an active recruitment drive. (para. 8.6)
21. We believe that the Government and its agencies have an important role to play in promoting equality of opportunity. (para. 8.7)
22. We recommend that more attention be paid in town planning and building design for inner cities to the avoidance of conditions which have been found to encourage vandalism and crime. (para. 8.8)

## Inner Cities Policy Group: Report

### 1. The Problem

- 1.1 "The Inner City Problem is about concentrations of relatively poor people, inadequately educated and trained, living in badly maintained housing in areas of declining economic activity, rising unemployment and increasing crime and vandalism."

We agree with this definition of the problem which is contained in the opening sentence of "Reviving the Inner Cities" by Michael Heseltine.

- 1.2 There is no single 'Inner Cities problem'. Each city differs in the relative weight of the ingredients which go to create its problems. The major problems occur in the inner areas (although generally not city centres) of the larger cities (i.e. parts of London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, Glasgow, Newcastle), although there are also likely to be problem 'pockets' in most older large towns. This makes a significant difference because local authorities should be capable of bringing about necessary improvement where only a small area is involved. The Government has for some years used indicators of social deprivation to define those areas in need of special help. (These are attached as Appendix A). The list of authorities benefitting from the existing urban programme is the best indicator of the general location of the problem areas. (Appendix B)

- 1.3 We started by questioning whether specific policies for inner cities were justified. For a number of reasons we concluded that such policies were necessary. First we believe that there is a risk of the decay and depression of the bad areas gradually spreading so as to damage the environment and economic vitality of surrounding areas. Secondly, the social tensions within the inner cities are damaging to community relations throughout the country. Thirdly, the level of unemployment, especially youth unemployment, and underuse of physical resources in inner cities is wasteful. Finally, we are

now convinced that the scale of the problem in a number of areas is such that it cannot be overcome by the Local Authorities alone nor by the general success of the Government's economic policies.

## 2. The Causes

2.1 The cities where the worst problems occur are those which grew rapidly during the nineteenth century with the industrial revolution, the growth of manufacturing and the spread of the railways. They were the engine and the flower of Victorian capitalism, and remain as decayed monuments to the confidence of Victorian commerce and philanthropy. That confidence and the civic leadership which went with it has very largely disappeared, coinciding with, although not entirely consequent on the rise of municipal socialism. It has been followed in the twentieth century by the decline of some major industries and major changes in employment patterns. Efficient modern manufacture and warehousing require generally single level premises not the multi-storey industrial buildings of the nineteenth century. The arrival of the motor car has altered radically transport patterns, both personal commuting and freight movement. It is no longer necessary for the workforce to live in the shadow of the factory. There has been an exodus of the prosperous followed by the self-sufficient and aspirant.

2.2 This movement from city centres was encouraged to reduce overcrowding. Many of the more skilled have moved to new towns and expanding towns; others have been decanted into new estates on the periphery of the city. There has been too much emphasis on public sector housing, badly built and worse managed. Extensive clearance was followed by the creation of new estates which have become social and often environmental slums. In some cities coloured communities crowded into substandard older private rented housing because they had little or no access to council housing. These areas are characterised by a shortage of politically literate people who are able to stand up to the interference of planners and politicians and to provide leadership in the social life of their community.

## 3. The Inner Cities Now

3.1 The Inner Cities, as a result, now have an unbalanced population. This is the most important characteristic of the problem areas and the one which they all have in common, in addition to the physical and environmental problems which, to some extent, are to be found in all urban areas.

3.2 The most significant aspect of the imbalance is the relative absence of younger families and those with management and technical skills and entrepreneurial attitudes. Most inner cities contain a well above average proportion of the retired, the unskilled, single

parent families and others dependent on supplementary benefit and social workers. Some also have concentrations of new commonwealth immigrants. There are also in some inner city areas concentrations of unemployable young people who are alienated from society and sometimes from their families.

- 3.3 The housing stock is usually dominated by council housing often in poor repair with many vandalised and empty units. The private rented sector, where it exists, is frequently substandard and such privately owned homes as there are are old and mostly in need of improvement.
- 3.4 Vacant sites and derelict industrial and commercial property abound, shopping is of poor quality and often vandalism and pilfering has driven shopkeepers large and small to close.
- 3.5 Street crime, vandalism and burglary are major problems. The schools are frequently very poor, mainly because of the concentration in them of children from problem families. The schools' difficulties are often made worse by high numbers of immigrant children, many with language difficulties.
- 3.6 It is not without significance that in nearly every case this desperate situation has grown during decades of municipal socialism, which has concentrated upon the provision of public sector housing, fostered excessive dependence on the state and been positively hostile to private development of any kind. Increasingly this socialist Local Government has been accompanied by ever higher rate demands which have crippled or discouraged alike the remaining entrepreneurs and home owners.
- 3.7 It was the 1970/4 Conservative Government, when Peter Walker was Secretary of State for the Environment, which first gave consideration to the special problems of inner cities. However, when the Socialist Government received the reports commissioned by Peter Walker, the programmes they initiated were totally inadequate. First, because they concentrated too much on the visible social consequences of the situation and neglected the causes, particularly the lack of private sector activity in both housing and employment. Secondly, the initiatives Labour introduced were over-dependent on co-operation with Socialist Local Authorities.

#### 4. What we have done

- 4.1 This Government has already done a great deal in its first term to reverse the consequences of decades of mismanagement.
- 4.2 While maintaining the Urban Programme it has redirected the Partnerships more towards spending money on strengthening local economies, job creation and helping firms. In 1982-3 the Partnership authorities are spending £120 million and the Programme Authorities £59 million.

- 4.3 The creation of the Urban Development Corporations in London's Dockland and Merseyside has brought the dynamism of new town development to urban wastelands. They are spending £64 million in 1982-3.
- 4.4 The Land registers have identified over 100 thousand acres of publicly owned waste and vacant land, much of it in inner city areas, some of it capable of development. The Secretary of State is about to use his powers of direction to secure the disposal to private sector builders of the first sites where a socialist local authority has refused disposal.
- 4.5 Derelict land grant has been increased from 50% to 80% for private reclamation schemes in areas where the maximum for local authorities is 100%. The programme budget has been increased from £59 million in 1982-3 to £75 million in 1983-4. Almost a quarter of the total expenditure now goes directly to urban schemes compared with 7% in 1978-9. In addition £14 million has been offered on condition that private sector investment will follow on the reclaimed site.
- 4.6 Urban Development Grant, an exciting new initiative, has been introduced to attract substantial private investment into inner city areas, by making grants available to support capital investment projects developed jointly by local authorities and the private sector. £60 million will be available for UDG in 1983-4.
- 4.7 ICE (Inner City Enterprise), launched in January 1983, is a private sector initiative with government encouragement to involve private sector money directly in property development in the inner cities.
- 4.8 Local Enterprise Agencies now number over 80. They are organisations set up by one or more private companies in association with local authorities to help small firms. The 1982 Finance Act provides tax relief on firms' contributions to approved enterprise agencies.
- 4.9 Enterprise Zones, although they are not primarily inner city initiatives, will test the notion that the removal of planning restrictions and tax burdens can generate enterprise.
- 4.10 The Priority Estates Projects piloted in Lambeth, Hackney and Bolton have shown how better management can make 'difficult to let estates' more attractive to tenants.

- 4.11 Stockbridge Village (formerly Cantril Farm), in Knowsley near Liverpool, is a more radical scheme to bring an apparently unlettable 1960s council housing estate back into use. A non-profit making trust, including people from the local community, the Abbey National Building Society and Barclays Bank, will take over the estate from Knowsley Council. New homes will be built by private builders and housing associations and old houses will be improved for sale.
- 4.12 Assured Tenancies and Shorthold are pioneer measures to expand the provision of private sector housing for rent without affecting the rights of existing tenants protected by the Rent Acts.
- 4.13 The low cost home ownership programme, including improvement for sale, building for sale, homesteading and shared ownership, have contributed in inner city areas to improving the housing mix.
- 4.14 Improvement grants and the new Enveloping initiative will play an important part in the renovation of older homes in inner city areas.
5. Policies for Urban Renewal
  - 5.1 All the above initiatives will help and should be maintained, although we emphasise that the full effects will only be felt in the longer term. All these various new initiatives together with the wide range of existing programmes available to Local Authorities, Housing Associations and the Private Sector are of limited use unless they are sensibly directed and vigorously promoted and managed. It is now clear that in many areas, the need is for a means of encouraging the take-up of improvement grants rather than improving still further the terms of the grant.
  - 5.2 It is a fallacy however to believe that Local Authorities are the only bodies capable of initiating and managing urban renewal. Nor do we believe that it would necessarily be appropriate to create numerous Task Forces similar to that set up for Merseyside or more Urban Development Corporations similar to Docklands, especially where the major problems are bad housing, environmental deprivation and absence of social balance.
  - 5.3 In such areas we propose the establishment of non-profit making Trusts similar in outline and conception to the Stockbridge Village Trust at Cantril Farm, Liverpool. These locally based Trusts would combine the skills and resources of the Public, Private, and Voluntary Sectors in a concerted attack on the problems of a defined area using any or all of the various initiatives and mainstream programmes available.

- 5.4 Because the active support and co-operation of Local Authorities is essential these local Trusts should not be imposed from outside and above but should be set up at the invitation of the Local Authority, whose various statutory powers would need to be used for the benefit of the Trust to enable it to carry out its agreed programmes.
- 5.5 To promote and establish these Local Trusts we propose that a central body similar to the Housing Corporation be set up and financed by Government and be called for the purpose of this paper the Urban Renewal Corporation.
- 5.6 This body would at the invitation of a Local Authority prepare proposals for a defined inner area incorporating physical and financial plans and the necessary agreements by which the various sectors involved would participate. Once its proposals had been accepted by the Local Authority and by any Government Departments involved it would set up the local Urban Renewal Trust to implement the proposals and subsequently monitor its performance on very similar lines to the monitoring of Registered Housing Associations by the Housing Corporation. We recognise that there will be some local authorities controlled by the far Left who will refuse to co-operate with the Urban Renewal Corporation. However, we believe that the number of such authorities will steadily diminish as the benefits of the operation of local trusts become evident. We believe that it is preferable to obtain the co-operation of the great bulk of local authorities by avoiding compulsion and that it will be possible to obtain political advantage where the local authority refuses to participate. Local Urban Renewal Trusts should use local contractors and local labour wherever possible.
- 5.7 Although these local Urban Renewal Trusts will in the main be financed through mainstream programmes such as Improvement, Urban Development and Derelict Land Grants and by mortgages and loans from the private sector the Urban Renewal Corporation should have sufficient Government Funding to enable it to finance the setting up of the Local Trusts, to cover any annual deficits and to make grants or loans for items which are outside mainstream programmes.
- 5.8 Another major area of difficulty for inner city businesses and residents is the level of the rate burden imposed upon them. Although we recognise that in some cases, this is perceived as a greater problem than it actually is, we are particularly concerned that the rate burden deters the development and expansion of existing businesses, the bringing into use of derelict buildings and vacant sites, and the influx of owner-occupiers. We therefore recommend that the concept of rating relief incorporated in enterprise

zones be extended to defined city renewal areas. We propose that all new development be given rate relief phased over 5 years so that in year 1 after development only 20% of the normal rates are paid and that the full rates do not become due until the 5th year. In the same way the additional rates applicable for extensions and improvements would be phased in over 5 years. When premises that have been unused for at least a year and have therefore been paying only half the rates are brought back into use, we propose a similar relief so that full rating is only reached after 5 increases of 10% per annum. We are not proposing that central Government should reimburse local authorities for this shortfall in rates revenue as we believe that the long-term increase in rateable values will compensate for the short-term loss of rate revenue.

## 6 Housing Policies

6.1 The local Urban Renewal Trust's housing responsibilities will include some or all of the following activities:

- (i) Comprehensive estate improvement schemes with joint public and private sector funding.
- (ii) Promoting improvement grant take-up through the use of small groups of experts to help and advise householders in applying for grants, obtaining finance for the balance of the expenditure, obtaining estimates and supervising the carrying out of the work. In addition, they might well buy properties to carry out demonstration schemes and provide temporary re-housing during the course of the works.
- (iii) Assuming management responsibilities of small estates or blocks of flats.
- (iv) Promoting take up of right to buy.
- (v) Identifying for local authorities opportunities for
  - (a) enveloping schemes
  - (b) sites to be used for building for sale schemes and other low cost home ownership scheme, and assisting local authorities in getting private sector support for incentives.

- (vi) Promoting environmental improvement schemes by using M.S.C. private sponsorship and urban programme funds.
  - (vii) Offering guarantee or buy back facilities to private sector developers.
  - (viii) Helping Housing Associations with schemes including hostel schemes.
- 6.2 There has been an overreaction to the clearance policies of the past which has obscured the need for a balance between clearance and improvement. In determining the correct balance we must remember that reestablishing confidence in run-down areas means that the renewal must be tackled at sufficient speed. Also the correct balance must aim at getting value for money from limited public resources.
- 6.3 Thirdly, we recognise that standards of unfitness were laid down 25 years ago and a plethora of grants, regulations and compensation provisions have been introduced. The time has come for a complete review of how these provisions affect inner city housing problems.

## 7 Policies for Enterprise and Employment

- 7.1 We are convinced that an improvement in employment opportunity in inner cities must come from smaller businesses. It is unlikely that, in any circumstances, larger employers are going to locate in inner city areas and those that are left there are unlikely to expand in their present locations. We, therefore, particularly welcome the wide range of measures that have been introduced to help smaller businesses. Within inner cities we believe that Enterprise Trusts or Agencies have a vital role to play in assisting the development and expansion of small industries and we welcome the creation of "Business in the Community" and the large number of Enterprise Agencies that have already been set up.
- 7.2 We would make two recommendations with regard to local Enterprise Agencies: first, that we believe they are more likely to be effective when they are managed by full-time directors rather than staff on secondment from the private sector. Seconded staff who are full and part-time have an important role to play, but we believe the director should be able to provide continuity and ensure independence for the Agency. We therefore believe that the Government should be ready to help fund such appointments through the traditional urban programme.

- 7.3 Secondly, we identify a continuing problem for many smaller firms in the attraction of both equity capital and loan support to finance development and expansion. The Enterprise Agencies would be an admirable vehicle for securing and managing small equity investment in new and smaller businesses by Banks and other financial institutions, which might otherwise be reluctant to make such small-scale investment. This reluctance is often because of the expense to a bank of monitoring smaller scale lending and their reluctance to get involved in equity holdings.
- 7.4 Many, but not all, of the inner city problem areas are located within development areas and can benefit from Regional Development Grants and grants from the European Development Fund. However, we do not think that the existing R.D.G. provides significant help to inner cities. This is because it is geared to larger scale capital intensive projects, whereas smaller businesses in inner cities are more likely to be using second-hand equipment in older buildings. There are also a number of inner city problem areas with very high levels of unemployment which are outside the development areas and therefore cut off from R.D.G. and the European Funds. We therefore recommend first that the methods of determining the areas that can benefit from R.D.G. and European Funds are re-examined so as to enable some inner city areas which are outside existing development areas to become eligible for aid.
- 7.5 Secondly, we believe it would be beneficial if some of the money at present used for R.D.G., £617 million 1982/3, be re-directed so as to be of more help to smaller businesses and inner city areas. We suggest that this could best be done by using some of those funds to make available "soft loans" for smaller businesses in inner cities and that as with the equity gap, the Enterprise Agencies could be the best vehicle for channelling these funds to businesses that need them.
- 7.6 We also recommend that the exemption from D.L.T given within enterprise zones be extended to all developments in the defined city renewal areas.
- 7.7 We recognise that there are in some areas particular difficulties in stimulating entrepreneurial activity in the black community. We therefore recommend that particular attention be paid to involving black community leaders in the task of encouraging people to set up and expand their own businesses. Again we believe that this could best be done through the activities of Enterprise Trusts in those areas with large black populations.

- 7.8 We believe tha retailing is an important source of job opportunity particularly as it is the largest employer of school leavers and provides many opportunities for the relatively unskilled. Employment in retailing is closely related to the volume of expenditure. Retail employment in and around inner city areas will therefore be related to the proportion of the retail spending of the population of the area which is retained in that area and employment will be increased if expenditure can be attracted into that area from outside. The nearer centres of retail employment are to inner city areas, the greater the likelihood that significant numbers of inner city residents will obtain employment. However, the relatively low per capita spending of inner city residents, especially on durables and clothing, together with the prevalence of pilfering and vandalism and the unattractive environment, deters retailers from locating in inner city areas and customers from outside visiting those areas. It is easier to upgrade an existing shopping centre than to start a new one from scratch. The availability of relatively cheap land often provides the possibility of developing alongside existing shops new and improved retail space with ample surface level car parking which is essential if the more affluent and more mobile shopper is to be attracted. We therefore recommend that I.C.E. (Inner City Enterprises) should give particular attention to the opportunities to improve shopping centres in and adjoining inner city problem areas.

## 8 Community Policies

- 8.1 There is a vital need to recreate in Inner City problem areas a sense of identity and pride in the community. We believe our recommendations on housing and employment will make a major contribution to that end. However, there are other measures which we recommend.
- 8.2 First, we are particularly concerned that the quality of education needs to be improved. In most inner city schools standards are so poor that not only do the schools fail to turn out young people who will be qualified to and prepared to contribute to the prosperity of their community but also they deter the very families with children of school age that we want to choose once again to live in the inner cities.

- 8.3 We recommend that consideration be given to the use of special Department of Education grants to raise standards in these schools and the Department and the Inspectorate become more closely involved in the drive to raise standards through monitoring the use of such grants. We would like all schools, but particularly those in inner cities, to seek ways of stimulating entrepreneurial instincts and leadership in the sporting, social and artistic life of the school.
- 8.4 Schools have an important role in the integration of ethnic minorities within the community. We recommend a radical change in our educational policies so that the teaching of English and British cultural and institutional values and history is given a prominent place in the school's curriculum. Special emphasis should be given to ensuring that additional nursery education, funded from partnership and programme authority resources is available to the areas of inner cities with ethnic problems. We also recommend that partnership and programme authorities should provide resources to enable those members of the immigrant community of all ages resident in this country, who desire to improve their understanding of the English language, to attend special schools and adult education centres. They should also institute special courses in schools and adult education centres with an emphasis on civics, British history, Constitutional development and legal rights.
- 8.5 Secondly, we suggest that school buildings are the most suitable location for a wide range of community activities starting with M.S.C. funded training for school leavers going on to adult education and including a wide range of other community activities, such as day centres for the elderly, meeting rooms, libraries and sporting and recreational facilities. There is widespread experience of the "Community College" concept and of dual use of school facilities. We believe it to have particular application to inner cities.

8.6 Thirdly, we support the call for the police to make every effort to relate clearly to the community within which they operate. The primary responsibility of the police is the maintenance of peace and enforcement of the law but they require the support of the community to carry out this task effectively. To this end, we suggest that the Home Office should ensure all forces are aware of and use the methods which have been most successful in achieving this objective. While not suggesting that normal standards of recruitment should be lowered we believe extra effort should be made to recruit special constables from the minority groups through an active recruitment drive. We note that in the Handsworth area of Birmingham 40% of special constables come from the immigrant community. We also believe that leaders of ethnic groups should lecture and speak to police recruits in training.

8.7 Fourthly, we would emphasise that it is essential that no group within the community should be given grounds for feeling that it is given less opportunity in housing, education or employment than other groups. Great care will be required, particularly by local authorities, to ensure that this is avoided. We believe that Government and its agencies have an important role to play in promoting equality of opportunity.

8.8 Finally, we recommend that more attention be paid in town planning and building design in inner cities, to the avoidance of design features which have been found to encourage vandalism and crime. Instead features in protective and crime prevention features should be given a high priority. Again, the Government has a role to play in publicising good practice and in monitoring publically-funded schemes to promote good practice. We support the view that town planning should encourage a mix of uses, housing and business, as crime flourishes where business and residential areas are segregated.

## 9 Conclusion

9.1 In conclusion, we would like to emphasise our view that the inner cities problem is more a human problem than an environmental problem. It is as much a problem of social balance as of the decay in the physical environment. The nature of the problem is such that they cannot be quickly cured. Our proposals are designed to re-enforce and strengthen the measures that have already been adopted by the Government; they will take time to show results. We would therefore emphasise the importance of monitoring the progress that is being made and being prepared to adapt measures to meet changes in the inner cities problem as necessary.

Approximately 478,000 tonnes of potatoes have been sold for stockfeed. In Great Britain, the Potato Marketing Board has approximately a further 160,000 tonnes under contract, some of which are currently being released back for human consumption.

The aim of support buying is to balance supply and demand in such a way that, for a crop whose yield can fluctuate widely from year to year, adequate supplies are ensured for consumers and at the same time producers receive not less than the guaranteed price. If the surplus were to be sold to consumers at reduced prices this would frustrate the purpose of the market support operations.

## ENVIRONMENT

### House Building

Mr. Arthur Lewis asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will give the annual rates of house building in the public and private sectors on 4 May 1979 and 4 May 1981.

Mr. Stanley: Following are the available estimates:

*House building starts and completions Great Britain  
Seasonally adjusted, annual rate: thousand dwellings*

	Public sector		Private sector	
	Starts	Completions	Starts	Completions
1979 first quarter	73	93	112	125
1981 first quarter*	34	112	125	122

\* Provisional.

Comparisons are not normally made on periods of less than three months.

### Housing Rebates

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the number of people (a) entitled to and (b) receiving housing rebates, distinguishing between people in paid work, people in receipt of short term national insurance benefit and people in receipt of long-term national insurance benefit.

Mr. Stanley: About 1.2 million households in England and Wales received a rent rebate or allowance in April 1980; of that number it is estimated that 16 per cent. of heads of households were in paid work, either part or full time. About 1.8 million households were entitled to a rebate or allowance; some 28 per cent. of the heads of these households were in paid work. These estimates are subject to a wide margin of error. I regret that estimates of those in receipt of long or short term national insurance benefits are not available.

### Local Authority Income (Rents)

Mr. McMahon asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, in view of the fact the council house rents are the main source of income to local authorities, if he will consider special financial assistance to local authorities in the event of the majority of housing stock being sold to the occupiers.

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Member will wish to take account of the fact that, though rent payment ceases and housing subsidy is reduced if a council dwelling is sold, the authority receives instead payment from the purchaser.

This may be a capital payment if the purchase is privately financed; or payments of capital and interest if the purchaser has taken a local authority mortgage. In addition, the local authority will no longer have liability for maintenance, repair and management expenses in respect of the dwelling concerned.

### Barlaston Hall

Mr. Cormack asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will take steps to ensure that the owners of Barlaston Hall are not allowed to demolish it.

Mr. Heseltine: Stafford borough council has recently referred to me an application from the owners for listed building consent to demolish Barlaston Hall. The building is sufficiently important to justify the holding of a public inquiry into the matter and, as arrangements for this are now in hand, I cannot therefore comment on the merits of the application.

### Commercial and Industrial Rates

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to legislate to restrict commercial and industrial rate rises to the rate of inflation.

Mr. King: This is one of many suggestions which have been made to assist commercial and industrial ratepayers, and which we are considering in conjunction with our review of the rating system.

### Rate Rebates

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will take steps to limit increases in rate rebates to the level of increases in the retail price index.

Mr. King: I have no plans to do so. The principle of the rebate scheme is to assist people with their actual rate bills according to an assessment of their means. It is to be expected that, for many reasons, increases in rates and in the retail price index will differ.

### Inner Urban Areas

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate the factors taken into account in his recent review of the lists of partnership and programme authorities and areas designated under the Inner Urban Areas Act.

Mr. Heseltine: In my statement of 9 February—[Vol. 998, c. 603-610.]—I said that I had decided not to make any changes now in the list of authorities with partnership or programme status or designated under the Inner Urban Areas Act. The data on which the original selection of partnership, programme and designated districts was made were drawn mainly from the 1971 census as published in *Hansard* on 13 June 1978.—[Vol. 951, c. 463.]—For the present review, comparable data for much the same factors have been assembled from more recent sources of information, notably the national dwelling and housing survey which was a sample survey conducted in 1977-79. These indicators, which underlay our decision, are set out in the attached tables. They cover a variety of social, economic and housing problems. Some, but not all, of

them relate to whole local authority areas, and are therefore of the same nature as those included in the list of grant-related expenditure indicators.

District	Population estimate (a) mid 1978		Estimated population (b) change 1971-78		Mortality rate (c)	Unemployment (d)		Low skill workers (e)		Single Parent families (f)		Elderly living alone (g)		Overcrowding(h)		Lack exclusive use of basic amenities (i)		Non-white persons (j)		
	Number	per cent.	Number	per cent.		Number	per cent.	Number	per cent.	Number	per cent.	Number	per cent.	Number	per cent.	Number	per cent.	Number	per cent.	
<i>Partnerships</i>																				
Birmingham	1,041,000	-56,100	-5	1.06	74,800	10.7	145,100	29	17,900	5	52,200	14	17,800	5	37,600	10	135,200	13		
Gateshead	214,200	-10,800	-5	1.17	25,500	14.1(l)	28,900	29	3,400	4	12,100	15	2,800	3	3,700	5	2,200	1		
Greenwich	204,500	-13,600	-6	1.01	9,200	n/a(n)	25,000	23	3,600	5	11,500	14	3,000	4	8,000	10	16,000	7		
Hackney	191,400	-28,200	-13	1.02	10,400	n/a(n)	28,000	30	6,400	9	9,900	14	5,300	7	14,100	19	55,900	29		
Islington	166,400	-33,900	-17	0.97	10,600	n/a(n)	24,100	27	3,800	6	10,000	15	4,400	7	14,100	21	78,600	17		
Lambeth	272,300	-33,900	-11	0.89	11,700	n/a(n)	31,600	23	7,800	7	14,000	13	6,300	6	22,500	21	63,600	24		
Lewisham	240,100	-28,000	-10	0.92	5,400	n/a(n)	28,000	22	5,800	6	12,700	14	4,300	5	11,800	13	37,700	15		
Liverpool	528,000	-77,300	-13	1.14	72,700	15.2	77,400	32	10,400	6	29,300	16	11,200	6	29,400	16	12,100	2		
Manchester	489,300	-57,200	-10	1.14	64,800	9.1	66,000	32	10,900	7	26,700	16	9,000	6	23,800	14	41,200	9		
Newcastle	291,600	-15,100	-5	1.10	27,900	10.2(l)	34,700	26	4,600	4	17,000	16	3,500	3	9,500	9	6,500	2		
Newham	227,100	-9,100	-4	0.97	9,500	n/a(n)	33,700	31	3,500	4	11,300	14	5,100	6	21,000	26	51,600	23		
Salford	256,000	-23,100	-8	1.22	*	*(m)	38,000	31	4,500	5	15,300	16	4,100	4	11,800	13	4,100	2		
Southwark	220,500	-40,300	-15	1.01	6,700	n/a(n)	33,200	29	5,100	6	14,000	16	3,400	4	11,200	13	34,300	16		
Tower Hamlets	148,500	-15,400	-9	1.05	8,000	n/a(n)	25,700	35	3,500	6	8,200	15	4,100	7	7,000	13	27,700	19		
<i>Programmes</i>																				
Bolton	260,000	+100	0	1.18	11,400	10.3	33,500	28	3,800	4	14,700	16	4,100	4	9,400	10	17,200	7		
Bradford	463,100	0	0	1.07	18,600	10.9	61,800	29	7,400	4	25,900	16	8,900	6	15,500	10	45,900	10		
Hanuversmith	166,700	-18,800	-10	0.97	12,400	n/a(n)	19,600	23	3,800	6	10,700	16	5,100	8	17,500	26	28,100	17		
Hull	272,400	-12,500	-4	1.13	21,700	11.8	42,300	34	5,000	5	14,600	15	4,400	4	13,100	13	2,500	1		
Leeds	728,500	-16,400	-2	1.03	29,800	8.7	82,100	24	11,200	4	37,300	14	9,000	3	15,700	6	34,700	5		
Leicester	277,500	-4,700	-2	1.03	18,800	8.0	36,900	28	5,100	5	14,600	15	4,400	5	14,200	15	60,400	22		
Middlesbrough	152,900	-4,100	-3	1.09	32,600	14.4(l)	20,400	30	3,000	6	6,100	12	2,100	4	3,100	6	4,800	3		
Nottingham	280,900	-17,000	-6	1.04	27,100	7.9	38,300	32	5,800	6	16,000	16	3,600	4	8,900	9	19,300	8		
Oldham	224,300	+200	0	1.14	9,000	9.2	33,600	32	3,900	5	12,900	16	3,300	4	6,700	8	12,600	6		
Sheffield	547,900	-21,800	-4	1.04	24,500	8.3	62,800	26	5,800	3	33,000	17	7,800	4	21,600	11	18,600	4		
Sunderland	300,200	+7,700	+3	1.13	21,800	15.5(l)	39,500	29	4,600	4	14,100	14	4,100	4	6,300	6	3,700	1		
S. Tyneside	164,200	-12,700	-7	1.18	*	*(m)	20,100	27	2,800	5	10,000	17	2,100	4	3,900	7	2,000	1		
N. Tyneside	194,900	-12,700	-6	1.10	*	*(m)	24,000	25	3,400	5	11,600	15	1,700	2	2,800	4	1,300	1		
Wirral	344,500	-12,200	-3	1.11	22,100	13.9(l)	38,500	25	5,100	4	18,200	15	2,900	2	6,900	6	3,400	1		
Wolverhampton	260,600	-8,500	-3	1.10	16,900	11.6	32,800	28	3,900	4	11,700	13	3,900	5	9,900	11	38,100	15		
<i>Designated Districts</i>																				
Barnsley	222,100	-3,700	-2	1.10	8,700	10.6	28,200	27	3,200	4	11,100	13	2,700	3	3,800	5	1,000	1		
Blackburn	142,900	+1,700	+1	1.16	7,300	10.6	*(k)	27	*(k)	5	*(k)	16	*(k)	4	*(k)	12	*(k)	9		
Brent	254,900	-25,200	-9	0.88	5,900	n/a(n)	30,800	22	5,700	6	9,700	10	5,400	6	14,900	16	88,200	33		
Doncaster	286,000	+4,400	+2	1.03	13,100	11.7	32,900	26	3,500	4	12,600	13	2,800	3	5,600	6	3,600	1		
Ealing	292,300	-8,900	-3	0.86	8,100	n/a(n)	31,400	21	3,900	4	11,100	11	5,300	5	13,400	13	70,300	25		
Haringey	227,400	-12,400	-5	0.95	8,600	n/a(n)	25,200	23	3,800	5	9,900	12	3,200	4	16,700	20	57,000	26		
Hartlepool	95,400	-4,100	-4	1.09	7,100	16.2	*(k)	34	*(k)	5	*(k)	13	*(k)	3	*(k)	8	*(k)	0		
Rochdale	209,100	+5,400	+3	1.15	6,300	12.4	28,600	29	4,000	5	11,400	16	3,500	5	4,500	6	9,000	5		
Rotherham	248,100	+4,800	+2	1.10	7,000	10.8	27,900	25	2,800	3	11,100	13	2,900	3	3,900	5	3,200	1		
St. Helens	189,500	+700	0	1.17	8,400	12.8	26,700	30	2,400	4	9,000	14	2,100	3	5,800	9	1,000	1		
Sandwell	309,500	-20,700	-6	1.13	30,000	9.8(l)	48,200	31	4,000	4	16,000	14	5,300	5	11,900	11	31,500	10		
Sefton	301,300	-7,600	-2	1.11	4,200	12.6	31,400	23	4,400	4	13,800	14	3,300	3	5,500	5	2,000	1		
Wandsworth	275,500	-26,500	-9	1.01	5,500	n/a(n)	28,700	20	4,600	4	14,500	14	5,100	5	17,800	17	51,800	19		
Wigan	311,300	+8,800	+3	1.20	9,500	13.1	42,300	30	3,900	4	14,800	14	3,700	3	8,300	8	2,000	1		

*Definition of Key Indicators*

The data shown in the table is derived mainly from published sources. In certain cases, however, unpublished sources are used. Also, where definitions are different from those used in published sources (i.e. single parent families and elderly living alone) unpublished tabulations were prepared specially.

N/A—Data not available.

(a) *Population Estimate*: Population Estimate for mid 1978.

Source: OPCS mid year estimate.

(b) *Population Change*: Percentage Change in Home Population between mid 1971 and mid 1978.

Source: OPCS mid year estimate.

(c) *Standardised Mortality Rate 1977*: The ratio of the locally adjusted death rate to the national rate.

Source: OPCS.

(d) *Unemployment*: The ratio of the economically active population registered as unemployed in local areas as at 13 November 1980. These relate to Department of Employment local employment office areas which do not correspond to local authorities but cover "Travel-to-Work" areas (see notes on unemployment data). The denominations used in calculating the percentage rates of unemployment are the mid 1976 estimates of employees (employed and unemployed).

Source: DE Gazette December 1980.

(e) *Low Skilled Workers*: The percentage of the economically active population in semi-skilled or unskilled socio-economic groups.

Source: 1977 NDHS.

(f) *Single Parent Families*: The number of single parent families with children aged 0-15 or 16-24 in full-time education as a percentage of the total number of private households.

Source: 1977 NDHS.

(g) *Elderly Living Alone*: The number of males over 65 and females over 60 who live on their own as a percentage of the total number of private households.

Source: 1977 NDHS.

(h) *Overcrowded Households*: The percentage of households living at a density of more than 1.0 persons per room.

Source: 1977 NDHS.

(i) *Households Lacking Amenities*: The percentage of households lacking the exclusive use of at least one of the three basic amenities.

Source: 1977 NDHS.

(j) *Non White Population*: The percentage of the household population who are non white.

Source: 1977 NDHS.

(k) NDHS sample size is too small to allow the production of reliable absolute figures for these indicators.

*Unemployment Data*

General data relate to local employment office areas or "Travel-to-Work" areas which have the same names as the districts in the table.

(l) Data relate to local employment office areas or "Travel-to-Work" areas which have different names to the districts listed in the table. The names do not correspond in the following cases:

District	Department of Employment Area
Newcastle	North Tyne
Gateshead	South Tyne
Sunderland	Wearside
Middlesbrough	Teesside
Wirral	Birkenhead
Sefton	Southport
	Dudley/Sandwell
Sandwell	

(m) Where "Travel-to-Work" areas cover more than one local authority district in the table the figures are included only once. The other districts' figures are omitted to avoid duplication. These are:

Salford (in Manchester TTWA—figure as for Manchester)

North Tyneside (in North Tyne TTWA—figure as for Newcastle)

South Tyneside (in South Tyne TTWA—figure as for Gateshead).

(n) Unemployment rates are not available separately for individual London boroughs. The total number of unemployed registered at local employment offices serving each borough is shown.

Within London, the employment offices and careers offices primarily serving the boroughs listed are as follows:

Greenwich—Deptford, Woolwich (and CO).

Lewisham—Lewisham (and CO).

Newham—Canning Town, East Ham and Newham East CO, Stratford (and CO).

Southwark—Bermondsey (and CO), Camberwell.

Tower Hamlets—Stepney (and CO), Poplar (and CO).

Hackney—Hackney (and CO), Shoreditch.

Islington—Holloway, King's Cross (and CO)

Lambeth—Brixton (and CO), Borough, Streatham.

Hammersmith—Hammersmith, Fulham.

Brent—Wembley (and CO), Willesden (and CO).

Ealing—Ealing (and CO), Acton (and CO), Southall.

Haringey—Wood Green, Tottenham.

Wandsworth—Clapham Junction (and CO), Tooting.

**Airey Houses**

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied with the condition of Airey houses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Airey houses were built between 1945 and 1955 as a limited part of the immediate post-war building programme. In December last year my Department became aware that defects which had recently been drawn to its attention might affect Airey houses generally. The Building Research Establishment immediately instituted an investigation of this problem. It has concluded that the design of the reinforced concrete columns in these houses is such that they are liable to corrosion and cracking. The effect of this may be to reduce the life of the structure, and affect its structural integrity with a possible risk to safety in extreme circumstances.

I am today notifying all local authorities of the findings of the Building Research Establishment's investigation and have asked that they notify any owners of Airey houses in their areas. I have advised local authorities to initiate a programme of inspection of their Airey houses and have asked that private owners be advised to do the same. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is taking similar action.

A copy of the letter sent to local authorities today and the BRE papers attached have been placed in the Library.

**TRANSPORT****Telford (M54-M6 Link)**

Mr. Cormack asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of hedgerow and how many ponds will be destroyed as a result of the construction of the M54 Telford-M6 link.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: About 12½ miles of hedge will be removed during construction and some 14 ponds will be lost. Approximately 15 miles of new hedge and 200,000 new trees and shrubs will however, be planted in the course of landscaping the scheme.

**CIVIL SERVICE****Official Documents**

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Minister for the Civil Service what is the estimated cost to public funds of providing facilities for answering queries about official documents.