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2 MARSHAM STREET  
LONDON SW1P 3EB  
01-212 3434

My ref:

Your ref:

8<sup>th</sup> March 1983

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*Dear Tim*

FAMILY POLICY GROUP: PAPER BY SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENVIRONMENT ON SPORT AND RECREATION (FPG(83)10)

/ I attach a table which should have been attached to the Annex to the above paper circulated yesterday. My apologies for its omission.

Copies go to Tony Rawsthorne (Home Office) John Kerr (Treasury) Imogen Wilde (DES) David Saunders (Department of Industry) Richard Bird (Department of Transport) David Clark (~~DES~~) DHSS Barnaby Shaw (Department of Employment) Mary Brown (Lord Privy Seal's Office) Alex Galloway (Office of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster) Pamela Hilton (Overseas Development Administration) Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office) and Gerry Spence (CPRS).

*Yours sincerely*  
*Roger Bright*

R BRIGHT  
Private Secretary

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## FAMILY POLICY GROUP

## PARENTHOOD

Note by the Central Policy Review Staff

Introduction

Both the paper by the Secretary of State for Education and the paper by the Secretary of State for Social Services cover two related issues :

- the quality of parenting
  - the question of teenage pregnancies
2. The essential questions for Ministers are :
- what is the proper role of Government in both these areas?
  - how should policy in these areas relate to the Government's central aims of increasing personal responsibility and the role of the family?

Preparation for Parenthood

3. There is certainly scope for improving the quality of parenting and Government has a role to play through the provision of education and training. But what is the evidence pointing to a "sharply rising trend" in irresponsible parents (para 2 of the Secretary of State for Education's paper)?

4. Can parenting be improved by training? There are many ways of bringing up children satisfactorily. Research suggests that success is based on certain common factors :

- affection
- stimulation, particularly direct conversation with the child
- consistency of discipline
- good supervision
- one good relationship with an adult, preferably a parent, at times of stress

5. Conversely there are factors which tend to carry a risk of adverse effects especially if several stresses are found together :

- apathy
- parental discord
- deprived social circumstances
- frequent hospital admissions
- large families
- parents' loneliness
- extremes of discipline

6. Not all of these factors are within the parents' control. There is a limit to what can be done in advance. But we believe that there is scope for preparing the ground for parenthood from school onwards.

7. Some possible approaches, in addition to those in the Secretary of State for Social Services' paper are :

- since most adults will spend more time with the family than elsewhere, Ministers might consider whether all school children should not spend some time learning about homemaking with some emphasis on caring for children - with practical experience - and about human relations. This would be as relevant to their future lives as, say, history.
- is there scope for more training in parenting with practical experience in the Youth Training Schemes for both boys and girls?
- could receipt of maternity benefits be conditional on one or both parents attending lessons on parenting (as at ante-natal classes in France)? Might preparation for parenthood be arranged for times when both future parents would be able to attend?
- could the voluntary movement encourage classes or self-help groups (with attendant creches) for new mothers?

#### Teenage pregnancies

8. Many teenagers make good parents but the papers by the two Secretaries of State imply that an essential component of better parenting is delayed

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parenthood. Teenage pregnancies are associated with substantially increased risks for mother and child - an increased rate of physical, behavioural and educational problems. Teenagers may be physically capable of producing children but they may not be emotionally equipped to bring them up. Also many of the children conceived by teenagers are not actually wanted.

9. First some facts :

- the proportion of girls aged 15-19 becoming pregnant is lower than in the early 1970s (though the most recent trend is slightly upwards).
- the rate of pregnancies of girls under 16 shows a similar trend.
- the proportion of girls aged 15-19 actually having babies has dropped even further because of the number of abortions.
- 1 in 25 girls aged 15-19 conceive outside marriage of which nearly 40 per cent have abortions.
- 1 in 250 girls under 16 conceive, of which nearly 60 per cent have abortions.

10. Three factors leading to teenage pregnancies :

- earlier physical maturity means that a high proportion of teenagers now engage in premarital sexual activity. But the evidence suggests that the vast majority of the young continue to stress the traditional values of love and friendship.
- there is some evidence that girls from severely unhappy, stressful, poor quality homes see pregnancy as the only way of securing a home separate from their parents, or of obtaining an answer to a need for some emotional attachment.
- inadequate knowledge about birth control plus some recent worries about the Pill. The older middle class girls are the most likely to use contraceptives. Young working-class boys without stable relationships are the least likely; working-class children tend to learn what they know about contraception from their peers and not from parents or teachers.

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11. Some adults consider teenage sexual activity as something undesirable in itself, quite apart from the undesirable consequence of unwanted pregnancies. Some adults believe that the availability of contraception and abortion through the National Health Service has itself been a spur to increased teenage sexual activity. In fact the evidence is patchy. The rate of premarital conceptions among teenagers did drop sharply after the introduction of the free NHS contraception service in 1974. Free abortions in 1967 reduced the rate of unwanted births although the rate of premarital conceptions continued to rise until the early 1970's. There is no present evidence of the effect of these developments on sexual activity.

12. Questions for Ministers fall into two groups representing two different views of the role of Government :-

- (a) - should Government take a moral stance and try to change the moral climate and so reduce the level of teenage sexual activity?
  - but would Ministers be concerned at the risk of more unwanted babies if this involved curtailing the availability of NHS contraceptives and abortions?
  - instead, would it be better to seek to discourage sexual activity through e.g. the route advocated in the Health Education Council advertisement ("no" is still the most effective birth control technique)?
  
- (b) - instead of taking a moral stance itself should Government seek to encourage young people through education (including education about the emotional as well as the physical aspects of sexual relationships) at home and at school to come to their own moral judgement based on a better informed assessment of their relationships and responsibilities?
  - would such action reach the most vulnerable and disadvantaged sections of the population or would it be necessary also to embark on a more open promotion of birth control, even if this risked the impression that Government was condoning a greater degree of sexual activity?
  - would more education about parenthood, for boys as well as girls, presenting a realistic (but perhaps not a "scaring") picture help to develop more responsible attitudes among the young (see paragraphs 6 and 7 above).

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13. A more detailed point arising from para 10:
- could Local Authorities with surplus housing help reduce one type of unwanted pregnancy by providing young people from a bad family environment with housing without their having to produce a child first?

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## FAMILY POLICY GROUP

SPORT AND RECREATION: PAPER BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR  
THE ENVIRONMENT

1. Participation in sport and recreation engenders positive attitudes, self-reliance, self-discipline and team spirit - especially amongst young people; it also fosters a sense of community identity in all age groups. On that premise, this paper considers current policy and provision for sport and recreation in the local community. The Annex gives details of current funding.

Provision of Facilities

2. We have all seen a great increase in facilities, mainly for indoor sports, over the past 30 years. Most major towns now have a multi-purpose recreation centre. Valuable though these large centres are, high travel costs - and sometimes entrance fees - limit their accessibility and use. They need to be supplemented by more local, small-scale facilities, sufficient to accommodate a limited range of activities and to provide a community focus. The Sports Council, which we grant-aid, is therefore providing for needy areas, by 1987, 60 standardised, low cost (£0.5 million) sports halls, in partnership with local authorities, construction of the first one has now begun in Toxteth). Accelerating this programme would obviously be desirable but would require extra public resources; the proposed locations will not readily attract funds from the private sector. There may be scope for voluntary groups to help run the facilities, thus reducing revenue costs.

3. We have also started to provide small-scale facilities like kick-about areas and artificial pitches in Liverpool, under our Merseyside Sports Initiative. We launched a special £ for £ scheme to encourage donations from the private and voluntary sectors for sports facilities and equipment. The scheme looks a success; an initial allocation of £1 million had to be raised to £1.25 million to match the amount from the private and voluntary sector. Neil Macfarlane has asked the Sports Council to initiate similar schemes (each of £0.2 million) in Newcastle and Bristol. These are now getting underway and he is looking for similar schemes in other areas.

4. Through schemes of this kind we get substantial community benefits for a relatively low outlay. Any extra funding provided could be spent and would show an early return.

#### Existing Facilities - Intensification of Use

5. Many facilities in public and private ownership are under-used. Neil Macfarlane has begun a campaign, with CBI support, to persuade companies and organisations to allow community use (perhaps just at certain times, like weekends) of their halls and fields. The response from the public sector already looks encouraging; and Neil is now approaching the top 100 companies. Where community use looks feasible, voluntary sector clubs are put into direct contact with individual companies/organisations.



Dual-Use of Schools

6. Together with DES we have urged the 105 Local Education Authorities to arrange community access to school facilities. We have no power of direction but must continue to persuade those where progress is slow. A survey completed last year showed that most LEAs are in favour of dual-use; and we are now supporting a voluntary sector working group, which is trying to bring user pressure to bear at the local level. The group is assembling notes on best practice and ways to overcome management problems, which will be used to help and encourage the slower authorities.

Motivation

7. Motivation is also required. Whilst participation has grown markedly since the War, it is still somewhat less than 50% of the population that engages in active recreation. The proportion is much less amongst the elderly (see below), minority groups and the under-privileged. We are supporting Sports Council programmes in London and the West Midlands which train leaders and motivators to encourage greater involvement in sport and recreation, particularly by the young and in inner-city areas. The programmes are going well. They are not expensive but we do not at present have the resources to extend them to other areas. The scope for voluntary agencies to provide leaders is being explored.

Children's Play

8. In the 5-16 age range, young people develop lasting attitudes and form social behaviour patterns. They are therefore a crucial target group for social and family policies. Organised children's play provides a training ground for leadership and organising skills. The voluntary sector, funded partly by central and local government, has traditionally taken the lead in establishing play schemes and training play leaders. Leading play organisations have been lobbying the Government to recognise the importance of children's play for some time. Early Day Motion 363, sponsored by the National Playing Fields Association and calling for a specific Ministerial focus, attracted more than 250 signatures. The Prime Minister has now agreed that this Department should take the lead, and I have asked Neil Macfarlane to take on this responsibility.

9. More than ever before there is a need for organised play facilities and for the committed individuals to create and run them. A substantial national effort is required, led if possible by the voluntary sector. Unfortunately, none of the existing voluntary organisations is sufficiently strong and vigorous to play the lead role required. They recognise this. With their support, consideration is being given to ways of establishing and funding a new voluntary body to meet this important need.

The Elderly

10. The elderly must also be an important target group for sport and recreation policies. They benefit of course from any increase

or improvement in facilities, especially in the local community. (Travel is a disincentive). There is special provision for the elderly in many sports centres, eg concessionary rates, activities like carpet bowls (which is booming) and movement and dance. For some sports like badminton special sessions for the elderly are available. We must look for more provision of this kind. We must also encourage the elderly to participate; the Sports Council (whose motto is "Sports for All") recently launched a successful scheme, called 50 Plus, designed to encourage those approaching and in retirement to take up new leisure activities.

CURRENT FUNDING FOR SPORT AND RECREATION

Government funding for sport and active recreation is available through the Sports Council and the Urban Programme. In total it amounted to something over £45m in 1982/83. This figure does not of course include local authority expenditure. The Sports Council was established by Royal Charter in 1972 and its functions include encouraging participation in sport through the provision of facilities. The Council gives financial support to local authority and private and voluntary sector schemes designed to increase the opportunities for people to take part in sport.

The Sports Council receives annual grant-in-aid from the Government. This has been increased from £15.2m in 1978/9 to £22.8m in 1982/3. In addition an extra £1m was made available by the Government under the Merseyside £-for-£ scheme. An extra £4.25m has also been allocated in this financial year for the provision of, for example, kick-about areas, and multi-purpose artificial surfaces in urban areas. Provision of £27.03m has been made for the financial year 1983/4. This includes a further £1m for Merseyside and £400,000 for £-for-£ schemes in Bristol and Tyneside.

Local authority sport and recreation projects of all kinds are eligible for grant-aid under the various facets of DOE's Urban Programme. The attached table sets out, by region, the total value of schemes approved for funding in 1982/83. All UP schemes require the support of the relevant local authority to be eligible for assistance although many of them are actually implemented by voluntary groups. UP resources are limited and sports projects must compete with other economic and environmental proposals. Individual local authorities determine their own priorities in deciding which bids they will submit to the Department for approval. There is, therefore, only limited scope for an increase in support for sport related schemes from this source by central Government.

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## SPORT AND RECREATION PROJECTS FUNDED UNDER THE URBAN PROGRAMME IN 1982/3:

REGION:	No of Projects	COST (£000'000)		
		CAP	REV	TOTAL
NRO : Partnership	15	458	556	1,014
Prog. Authorities	27	520	234	754
Total	42	978	790	1,768
NWRO* Partnerships	95	3,850	284	4,134
Prog. Authorities	21	401	-	401
Total	116	4,251	284	4,535
YHRO: Prog. Authorities	48	844	146	990
WMRO : Partnership	52	924	483	1,407
Prog. Authority	15	251	100	351
Total	67	1,175	583	1,758
EMRO : Prog. Authorities	22	1,697	28	1,725
GREATER PARTNERSHIPS	35	2,177	156	2,333
LONDON : Prog. Authority	8	129	135	264
Total	43	2,306	291	2,597
TRADITIONAL URBAN PROGRAMME*	88	1,941	949	2,890
Circular 22 Approvals	26	1,277	-	1,277
Additional Approvals <sup>1</sup>	114	3,218	949	4,167
TOTAL Partnerships	197	7,409	1,479	8,888
Prog. Authorities	141	3,842	643	4,485
Trad UP	114	3,218	949	4,167
Grand Total	452	14,469	3,071	17,540

Note : \* Excludes committed projects inherited from previous years.

<sup>1</sup> Additional project approvals to mop up capital underspend in 1982/3.

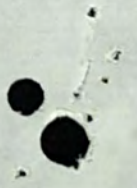
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## FAMILY POLICY GROUP

## PREPARATION FOR PARENTHOOD

Paper by the Secretary of State for Social Services

Poor parenting is more widespread than any of us would like. It can lead to poor educational attainment and to crime - although there is no automatic link - and certainly a great deal of unhappiness. However, as the Secretary of State for Education says, the crucial question is whether Government should try to improve the position and, if so, how? In reaching a conclusion on that we should at least take into account the following points:

- (1) There is no single "right" kind of parenting and we know more about what can go wrong than ways of being right. There is still considerable uncertainty as to what is good practice in child rearing and parenthood.
- (2) If we are to tackle the problem of poor parenting then we need to look at both preparation for parenthood and support for parents. When parents fail in their task it is not usually because they do not know what good parenting is but because they cannot cope with the many external pressures and demands on them. Ideally what is needed in that situation is a readily available informal support and advice system that parents can turn to when they need it.
- (3) It is extremely difficult to generalise about "problem" groups. For example, we know that the divorce rate in 1961 was two per thousand married persons and that by 1980 this had increased to twelve per thousand. As many as one in three marriages today will probably end

E. R.

in divorce. 59 per cent of divorces involve dependant children and in 1980 40,000 of them were under five years old. But divorce in itself is not necessarily an accurate indicator of social handicap in children. Many single parents are extremely good parents while in any event something like 80 per cent of those divorcing under the age of thirty will remarry within five years.

- (4) Not all the figures by any means support a conclusion that there has been an increase in poor parenting or a sharply rising trend of "irresponsible parents". For example, the proportion of children in care in the population appears to have held level from 1952 to 1970, then experienced an increase during the 1970s which tailed off towards the end of the decade with a fall in 1981. The annual number of admissions each year has fallen from 50,000 in 1973 to 43,000 in 1981. The number of children placed in care by parents has fallen from 40,000 in 1974 (82 per cent of admissions) to under 29,000 in 1981 (67 per cent of admissions). Two other interesting figures are that the rate of births per thousand women under the age of twenty has dropped from 42 in 1970 to 26 in 1980 (although there has been an increase in illegitimate births between 1979 and 1980). While the rate of births per thousand women under the age of sixteen has dropped from 2.2 in 1970 to 1.6 in 1980.

I would suggest that all this points to our adopting a cautious approach. We should develop existing successful schemes - rather than adopt dramatic (and highly controversial) new tactics like "scare" films on maternity. We should consider both preparation for parenthood and support for parents. In all our policies we should remember the contribution that can be made by voluntary organisations who are generally much freer than statutory organisations to pioneer new approaches and to try out new ideas. I would therefore suggest that our policy should include:

- (i) The development of community based self-help family centres, as suggested by Mia Pringle. The centres would be multi-purpose: they would provide a meeting



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point for purely social and recreational purposes; they would enable parents to offer support to each other; and they would make available advice counselling and when need be referral to specialised agencies. In short they could be used as a source of help and support without automatically labelling parents as having failed in some way or as being problem cases. The establishment of such self-help centres would be a natural role for the voluntary sector.

- (ii) We should concentrate on schemes likely to reach parents at risk because of their unsupported life, extreme youth, or history of poor success with previous children. Again the voluntary sector has an important part to play. The kinds of schemes to develop include:

Playgroups places increased from 263,000 in 1972 to 365,000 in 1981. Groups now total nearly 15,000. Through national associations the DHSS and DES have been working jointly to push the playgroup movement into the more deprived areas.

Home start schemes. These were started in Leicester in 1973. They consist of teams of trained volunteers, themselves mothers, who visit families with young children who are experiencing difficulties. Professional back-up is provided by the statutory services when required. There are currently something like twenty-five home start type schemes throughout the country.

Child minding. The number of registered child minders is almost 43,000 and the number of children minded is just over 100,000. We estimate that the number of children being minded by unregistered minders is a further 100,000. We aim here to improve the status, training and support of child minders by developing the work of the National Child Minding Association.

E. R.

Health visitors who have increased by 38 per cent between 1971 and 1979. The scheme mentioned by the Secretary of State for Education in Southampton was probably an early scheme of home visiting to help with family planning advice. 16,000 women were so visited in 1981.

Ante-natal classes and the involvement of both parents in such classes.

- (iii) The Health Education Council - which now has a new Chairman and a new Director General - has a role in seeking to get a general message on preparation for parenthood across to both young people in schools and further education and the youth service and also parents and prospective parents.

There is one last point. Clearly there are difficulties in insisting that preparation for parenthood should be taught in schools if teachers are unenthusiastic and the children are inattentive. However, it was significant that the conference organised by the National Childrens Bureau on preparation for parenthood agreed that it was desirable that all children should receive education on this at some stage in their school career. It would be possible for teachers to be supported by health professionals including trained health education officers. The best approach would probably be to go for a wide objective: keeping yourself fit, being sensible about approaching parenthood, learning about children's development, and health education generally. It would seem a pity if the unique opportunities that schools have for influencing attitudes should not be taken.

7 March 1983

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