

Did not arrive before PM saw
the earlier PM on the weekend.
Re NBPA now.

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From The Secretary of State for Wales

Rt Hon Peter Walker MBE MP

CT/6156/88

Recd. 3/10
30 September 1988

COMMUNITY CHARGE : STUDENT NURSES

Thank you for copying to me your letter of 8 September to Malcolm Rifkind. As you say, the main question to which we have to find a solution is whether or not to extend the 80% relief to all nurses on pre-registration courses.

So far as the four options presented in the official paper are concerned, I am inclined to favour option iv, although I should be prepared to accept option iii if that makes matters administratively easier in Scotland. Either option would of course have the same effect in Wales, as also in England.

I appreciate that the choice of options - between i and ii on the one hand and iii and iv on the other - is very finely balanced. All the options converge over time: at some point in future all nurses will be undertaking Project 2000 courses and will be eligible for 80% relief. I note also that the effect on all community charge payers' bills of extending the 80% relief to all nurses is minimal.

Of course, as the paper points out, there are inconsistencies inherent in allowing relief to student nurses and not to other groups of trainees. But in my view, whatever we decide, some nurses will be seen by other groups to be receiving special treatment. To me the over-riding problem seems to be one of presentation: I feel that we should only leave ourselves open to be criticised if we were to treat all (and not just some) student nurses as a special case.

For reasons of presentation also, I would be inclined to extend the relief concession to midwifery trainees as well. So far as the treatment of nurses in higher education is concerned, I agree that they should qualify for the 80% relief. Similarly, I accept the paper's recommendation that second registration student nurses should be treated in the same way as student nurses on pre-registration courses.

/ I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, members of E(LF), the Chief Whip and Sir Robin Butler.

Rt Hon Nicholas Ridley MP
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