



**The Royal College of Midwives**

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13th April 1989

Ref: RMA/NDO

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
Westminster  
LONDON

*Dear Mrs. Thatcher*

I am writing on behalf of the Royal College of Midwives to recommend very strongly that the Chief Nursing Officer of the Department of Health be a full member of the NHS Policy Board. To date the indications would seem to be that the possibility exists that such membership is not seen to be necessary. We believe it to be essential for a number of reasons.

The Policy Board will be addressing issues which will be profoundly affected by and often intricately bound up in those which relate to nurses, midwives and health visitors. Firstly, policies relating to the provision of health care will be set in the context of the availability of nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff at a time when manpower problems will increase. Policy making for health care is and will continue to be affected by the immense size of the nursing and midwifery workforce, its high proportion in the context of the whole health care related workforce and the size of the wage bill it generates. Secondly, at a time when policy for health care is being determined in the context of a possible decrease in availability of manpower to achieve adequate numbers of nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff, the health care of the country will become increasingly focused on health needs linked to increasing birth-rates, increase in the elderly and a very possible increase in HIV and HIV related illness, all situations which require proportionately greater numbers of nursing and midwifery staff than other health care workers for the provision of the care needed.

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Finally, the NHS is just embarking on a major change in the process of education of nurses. Any decisions on the provision of health care will need to be made in the context of these changes and in the knowledge of the effect of the changes at any given time in their passage.

Decisions on policy making and management of health care will require someone from the nursing professions being one of the policy making body. The Chief Nursing Officer, whose role ensures a network stretching into all areas of nursing/midwifery care, management and education would be the most appropriate person to undertake this job. The impetus for change reaches its potential only when those involved in the policies for change also are seen as the leaders of the change. The potential with nursing, midwifery and health visiting will be more easily brought about if a leader of the professions is recognised as being essential at the policy making level.

Yours sincerely

*Ruth M. Ashton*

Ruth M Ashton (Miss)  
General Secretary

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