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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY

Alexander Fleming House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6BY

Telephone 01-407 5522

From the Secretary of State for Social Services

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The Rt Hon Tom King MP
Secretary of State for the Environment
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
LONDON SW1

7 April 1983

Prime Minister

Mr Fowler intends to turn the DHSS' Social Work Service into an inspectorate to steer local authorities into making the most effective use of their personal social services. He will issue a consultative document next week. (a draft is attached)

9
Tom

EFFICIENCY IN PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES

I have been concerned for some time that the task of local authorities in providing personal social services has not been subject to the same scrutiny of efficiency to ensure value for money that I have been insisting on in other fields. The interest of the District Audit and in future of the Audit Commission - in this area is of course welcome.

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I now envisage a considerable change in the role of my Department's 'Social Work Service'. The Service would in effect become an inspectorate (it already exercises some statutory powers of inspection), whose aim would be to steer authorities into making the most effective use of professional and other resources. It would inspect the work of individual authorities and submit a report, which would usually be a public document, to the authorities own Social Service Committee so as to increase the responsibility and role of elected members. It would also study the work of authorities generally so as to disseminate good practice more effectively.

I would not increase the permanent staff of SWS. Instead we would recruit people on short secondment from local authorities - so as to keep in touch with work on the ground - and also from industry and outside professions such as accountants.

There would be no requirement for legislation, and the costs would be contained within my Department's administrative budget.

I intend to issue my proposals next week, suitably in advance of the local government elections, as a short consultative paper. I shall be sending a copy to the local authority associations and, under cover of a short letter, to the Chairmen of local authority social services committees. Copies of these documents are attached for information.

I am sending a copy of this letter and enclosures to Willie Whitelaw, Keith Joseph, Nicholas Edwards, George Younger, Leon Brittan, Janet Young, the Prime Minister and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours
Norman Fowler

NORMAN FOWLER



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY

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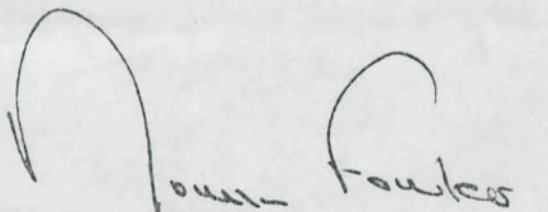
From the Secretary of State for Social Services

Dear Chairman.

All Chairmen of Social Services Committees recognise the importance of demonstrating to Parliament, to the public and particularly to local rate-payers, that personal social services are giving good value for money.

I want to increase the effectiveness of my own Department's Social Work Service and I commend to local authorities for their consideration the proposals in the short consultative paper, a copy of which accompanies this letter. Their purpose is greater participation by staff from the field, and more attention to questions of management and efficiency. We shall look forward to receiving comments through the local authority associations.

I believe that other recent developments, such as the helpful general reports from District Audit on services for children, have been widely welcomed by Social Services Committees. Your Committee and managers in the social services department will have your own programmes for increasing the efficient use of resources. If there are further steps you think I and my Department can take to help you, I hope you will write to me.

Yours sincerely, 
NORMAN FOWLER

SECOND DRAFT

THE SOCIAL WORK SERVICE OF DHSS:
A CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT

The Second Report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1981/1982, and the Barclay Report (Social Workers: Their Role and Tasks, NISW, 1982) commented on an inspectorate in the personal social services in ways that should influence the future role and functions of the Social Work Service of the Department of Health and Social Security.

The Select Committee received evidence about the present role of SWS and concluded (Recommendation 35): "We favour the idea of an inspectorate based on the present Social Work Service and envisage an improved inspectorial capability as representing an important means of facilitating a more fruitful dialogue between the Department and local authorities, and of increasing the professionalism and efficiency of PSSDs".

The Barclay Report recommended that an independent inspectorate should be established. A minority of the working group considered that extending the powers and duties of SWS would be the best means of achieving this, and the Secretaries of State were asked to consider this. Most of the groups consulted by the Department about the Barclay Report have indicated that if there is to be such an inspectorate, they would favour basing it on SWS.

The Social Work Service is a professional service of the DHSS. It has three closely related groups of functions:-

- i. contributing to the development and implementation of policy within the Department's responsibility;
- ii. acting as a principal point of contact between social services authorities and the Department and undertaking inspectorial activities, including regulative functions on behalf of the Secretary of State;
- iii. contributing, as a professional service, to other relevant Departmental business.

A more detailed description of the functions of SWS was given in DSWS(79)1, The Social Work Service of DHSS.

The Social Work Service will continue to discharge these principal functions. It is proposed to add to them, however, by increasing the scope and nature of its inspectorial activities in the following ways:-

1. At present, the Social Work Service benefits from short secondments of staff from personal social services authorities for work in conjunction with the Health Advisory Service. It is proposed to increase the number and broaden the purpose of short secondments into SWS; and to include staff from other relevant professional disciplines (in local government and industry and the professions) as well as staff from authorities and agencies providing personal social services. The field for secondment should be wide in order to meet the particular objective of the Select Committee of "increasing the professionalism and efficiency of PSSDs" and should extend, for example, to officers with particular experience in local authority and financial management. Staff so seconded would work with officers of SWS, mainly on tasks on a regional or national basis. The programmes of work would be drawn up after consultation with the local authority associations or with the local authorities concerned. Reports on work in individual authorities would be made to the authorities' own Social Services Committee; a composite report would be published in the series of Social Work Service Papers. A principal objective of these exercises would be to acquire and distribute information about aspects of the organisation and provision of personal social services that demonstrated the most effective use of professional and other resources.

2. The Government proposes, while this programme is being prepared, to establish a Working Group, with the local authority associations, to study social services departments' own systems of controlling the effectiveness and efficiency of the services provided, with a view to recommending models of good practice. Such a Group should include representation

from the voluntary sector. It would also provide a focus for further discussion of cost indicators.

3. The Social Work Service will also increase the number of inspections carried out under formal powers. This will provide a more systematic scrutiny of personal social services by a body independent of service management. SWS already enjoys the collaboration of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools and the Probation Inspectorate of the Home Office. It is proposed to include staff from agencies in the field and from other disciplines in formal inspections as appropriate. SWS will continue to report to the Secretary of State on inspections carried out under formal powers, and reports will also be submitted to the Social Services Committee of the local authority inspected or to the managing committee of other organisations inspected. Publication of reports of formal inspections will remain a matter for determination by the Secretary of State, but such reports will normally be regarded as documents of public access.

4. The existing powers of formal inspection are wide but do not cover all aspects of the personal social services. The Secretary of State does not, however, propose to extend these powers at this stage. All progress in developing personal social services depends upon the willing co-operation of the authorities which discharge the statutory powers and duties. Their participation in the programme outlined earlier should enable the whole of the personal social services to be adequately scrutinised without recourse to additional powers of inspection.

5. The Social Work Service has the whole of the personal social services within its remit. Its title, however, suggests that its activities are limited to those traditionally associated with social work. The development proposed in its role provides an opportunity to consider also a more appropriate title. It is suggested that this might be "Social Services Inspectorate".

Comments on these proposals should be returned to
by

BR 7654
11 12 1

7 APR 1983



2 MARSHAM STREET

LONDON SW1P 3EB

01-212 3434

My ref: K/PSO/12036/83

Your ref:

NBPM

MUS 14/4

14 April 1983

DN

Thank you for your letter of 7[✓] April about the new role for your Department's Social Work Service.

I have no objection to what you propose, but I do hope that you will make the Service aware of the role of the Audit Commission, one of whose duties as you know is to conduct comparative value for money studies to identify best practice in the provision of local authority services. I think it would be to the advantage of everyone if the Commission and the Social Work Service were to keep in contact about their work.

I also assume that the Social Work Service will be kept in close touch with developments in policy on central/local relations. I have in mind, for example, the implications, for the promotion of value for money in local government, of our Financial Management Initiative; and also, of course, the general question of constraints on local authority spending. It is obviously important that the Service should be able to make any recommendations in the light of full knowledge of national policy objectives.

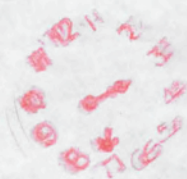
I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

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[Signature]

TOM KING

SOCIAL SERVICES : Efficiency in Personal Social
Services : April 1983,

4 APR 1983





CCNO

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21 April 1983

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

MSRM

msw/4

Dear Norman,

EFFICIENCY IN PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 17 April to Tom King.

I welcome the proposals you outline, especially for increasing the number and broadening the purpose of secondments into the Social Work Service; the development of models of good practice; and the increase in the number of formal inspections. I very much hope that these proposals receive a good response from the Local Authority Associations and the Local Authorities since they seem to me squarely in line with our wish as a Government to strengthen assurances to the public that services provided to them are as good as they can be made.

I am copying this to Tom King and our other colleagues.

Yours ever

Baroness

BARONESS YOUNG

2 APR 1983





*Social
Services*

NR PM

MW 19/4

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street. SW1P 3AG

Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP
Secretary of State
Department of Health
and Social Security
Alexander Fleming House
Elephant & Castle
London SE1 8BY

18 April 1983

2 Norman,

EFFICIENCY IN PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 7 April to Tom King about the proposed Social Services Inspectorate, based on your department's existing Social Work Service. Like Nicholas Edwards I would welcome some more time for these proposals to be considered fully, not least because your intention to take on new functions raises manpower questions even though you do not envisage an increase in the permanent staff of the SWS. I can of course also see the potential merits of an efficiency Inspectorate - if indeed that were what the SSI would turn out to be.

I understand the consultative paper is already being issued. It will be useful to have the responses to it. Once we have these, we shall have to take a considered view on the merits of the proposal.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Willie Whitelaw, Keith Joseph, Nicholas Edwards, George Younger, Janet Young, Tom King and Sir Robert Armstrong.

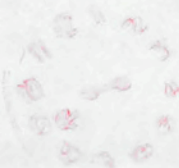
Leon

Leon

LEON BRITTAN

Social Service, Aunt S
Efficiency in General Service.

9 4 1983



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WELSH OFFICE
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From The Secretary of State for Wales

The Rt Hon Nicholas Edwards MP

13 April 1983

De Norm

EFFICIENCY IN PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES

Thank you for copying to me your letter of 7 April to Tom King about proposals for developing the inspectorial role of the Social Work Service in England. In view of the likely repercussions for Wales, it would have been helpful to have had a little longer to consider your document before it issued.

Naturally I have every sympathy with the overall objectives of securing greater professionalism and efficiency in the personal social services. I will be giving further thought to how these objectives can best be pursued in Wales, and will shortly be consulting on these issues in the Principality.

Copies of this letter go to recipients of yours.

es
Nia

The Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP