

pa
MR NORGEOVE

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

This is to confirm our discussion today of the presentation of the payment of arrears of housing benefit, covering the period when a rate had not been set, to Liverpool, among other authorities.

I said that given the risk of legal challenge, it seemed important to get the Government on side quickly by making the payments.

However, I believe that if this were done the Government should not simply post the cheques and leave Liverpool (and other authorities) to misrepresent their payment.

We needed to command presentation. The way to do this was to issue a press notice at the same time as the LAs involved received the payments, or notice of payment, explaining what the payments were and why they were being made. It would be important to list all the authorities benefiting and the breakdown of payments, and to bring out the fact that the subsidy in payment to Liverpool in September alone exceeded the amount of back pay.

I further said that if the cheques, or notice of payment, went out today a press notice should be released tomorrow morning; we must not let Liverpool (or others) get in first. If the cheques went out on Friday we should issue the press notice on Saturday.

I should add that DHSS should pay particular attention to the local media in each of the authority areas involved.

Bernard Ingham

BERNARD INGHAM
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