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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY

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

Telephone 01-407 5522

From the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health

Mark Addison Esq

- 7 AUG 85

Dear Mark

WBM

In view of the Prime Minister's interest in volunteers, you may be interested to see the attached Press Notice which will be issued on Thursday 8 August.

Yours sincerely

Carol

CAROL HULKES
Assistant Private Secretary

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PRESS RELEASE

Alexander Fleming House
Elephant and Castle
London SE1 6BY

Telephone 01-407 5522

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FUTURE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING SCHEME

John Patten, Parliamentary Secretary for Health announced today that the Opportunities for Volunteering scheme would be relaunched from 1 April 1986 as a 3 year rolling programme.

Mr Patten said: "The Opportunities for Volunteering scheme, involves about 20,000 volunteers, including unemployed people. They volunteer in some 700 projects a year, providing assistance to over 30,000 people. This makes a valuable contribution to mobilising voluntary effort which is of great assistance in the health and personal social services fields. The scheme has been a success.

"I have therefore decided to relaunch the scheme from 1 April 1986 as a 3 year rolling programme. In other respects, the relaunched scheme will incorporate the successful features of the existing scheme. It will therefore broadly follow the existing lines.

"The scheme is administered by the voluntary sector itself. It is a practical example of our policy of seeking partnership between the state and the voluntary sector. The 16 national voluntary organisations* that have acted as the Department's agents in administering the scheme are being invited to work closely together and with the Department in planning the future effective operation of the scheme".

* Consortium on Opportunities for Volunteering, Age Concern, British Council of Churches, British Association of Settlements and Social Action centres, Barnardo's, Children's Society, Community Service Volunteers, National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, Pre-school Playgroups Association, Spastics Society, Royal National Institute for the Blind, Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, Panel of Four, The National Association of Leagues of Hospital Friends, MIND and MENCAP.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

The Opportunities for Volunteering scheme was initially announced by the Prime Minister in July 1981. The scheme started in May 1982 with a total of £3.3 million available for projects and its success led to a decision to make £5 million available for the scheme in 1983/84 and similar amounts in 1984/85 and 1985/86.

The objectives of the scheme are:-

- i. to develop opportunities for unemployed people to undertake voluntary work;
- ii. to expand voluntary work in the field of health and personal social services; and
- iii. to spend the money in such ways that benefits will, as far as possible, continue to accrue in the longer term.

The criteria for funding are:-

- a. the project must enable or encourage unemployed people to undertake voluntary work in England;
- b. the voluntary work must be of assistance in the fields of health and/or personal social services; and
- c. the applicant for the grant must be of a voluntary organisation or group.

The scheme provides money for 16 national voluntary organisations acting as agents to make grants to local voluntary projects.

Examples of projects that have received grants in the past are:-

A project to assist the development of parent/toddler groups and a mobile toy library at Bristol University Settlement;

the development of the Broadway Afro Caribbean Luncheon Club (Derby) on the initiative of a group of young West Indian people. The club provides lunch, social and educational activities for primarily elderly West Indian people who may have no relatives in Britain;

renovation of a building to establish the Devonshire Centre (Birkenhead) in which over 50 volunteers are involved in providing extensive care for about 50 elderly mentally frail old people;

a scheme (Art Care, Gateshead) to enable volunteers to provide resources for play schemes etc eg painting a mural for a play area, or renovating play group equipment;

developing volunteering and self help opportunities by Telegraph Hill Neighbourhood Council (Lewisham) such as a single parents group and a pensioners "pop-in".

Details of how local voluntary projects can apply for grants should be available in the autumn from the national voluntary organisations acting as agents.

