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Circular 16/58.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH,
SAVILE ROW,
LONDON, W.1.

10th July, 1958.

To County Councils,
County Borough Councils (England and Wales)

Sir,

Services for Handicapped Persons

1. I am directed by the Minister of Health to refer to the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee of Inquiry on the rehabilitation, training and resettlement of disabled persons (Cmd. 9883) so far as they concern services provided under the National Health Service and National Assistance Acts for which he is the central authority.

2. As regards services which local authorities have power to provide under Section 29 of the National Assistance Act, 1948, the Committee concluded (paragraph 106 of their Report) that there is a need for fuller and better provision and scope for considerable development. They urged increased provision of day clubs or centres for the handicapped (paragraph 115) and a wider provision of occupational homework (paragraph 228 and recommendation 31); and more help by local authorities in the supplying of necessary personal aids (paragraph 131 and recommendation 14) and in effecting structural alterations in disabled persons' homes (paragraph 135 and recommendation 15, and also recommendation 42 with particular reference to paraplegics). In paragraph 124 the Committee expressed the view that more would have been done by local authorities in developing welfare services under Section 29 if more assistance from central funds had been available and they recommended that local authorities should be granted by the Exchequer in their expenditure on these services. The Government consider that, in view of their proposal, embodied in the Local Government Bill now before Parliament, to introduce a general Exchequer grant covering a large number of services, including the local health services, it would be inappropriate to introduce a new specific grant for welfare services for the handicapped. On the assumption, however, that the Bill is enacted in substantially its present form, they have decided that a measure of assistance should be given through the general grant towards the expenditure of local authorities in developing their services in future years and an appropriate allowance for this purpose will be included in the amount of the general grant for the first grant period starting in the year 1959-60. While appreciating that the development of Section 29 services must have regard to current financial considerations, the Minister feels sure that this decision will encourage local authorities to proceed as opportunity serves along the lines endorsed by the Committee.

3. I am to take this opportunity to refer to circular 32/51 dated 28th August, 1951, in which the Minister invited authorities to submit to him schemes for the provision of welfare services for handicapped persons other than the blind and partially sighted. In that circular it was said in regard to the duties which adoption of a scheme makes obligatory on the Council

*The Clerk of the County Council,
The Town Clerk.*

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that "these services seem to him (the Minister) to represent a substantial advance on existing measures for the welfare of the handicapped and yet to impose no undue burden on any area, even in the difficult circumstances of today". The Minister asks the relatively small number of local authorities who have not yet submitted schemes to him to give renewed consideration to their adoption in the light of the remarks quoted and the other considerations advanced in the 1951 circular. He appreciates that a number of these authorities are supporting financially the provision of services by voluntary organisations but he is satisfied that adoption by an authority of powers to provide services themselves (which they can exercise in full co-operation with the voluntary organisations) enables better and more uniform provision to be made.

4. In recommendation 40 the Committee urge that more hostels for tuberculous persons whose home circumstances are unfavourable or for whom suitable employment cannot be found in their home area, of the kind already provided by one or two local authorities, should be established where they are found to be necessary; in recommendation 44 that local authorities should be encouraged to experiment in the provision of hostels for convalescent mental patients while undergoing industrial rehabilitation or training, or on first entering employment. Neither of these recommendations is of universal application. If an individual authority thinks there is a need for and wishes to provide a hostel of either type in their area the Minister will be ready to consider proposals as sympathetically as he is able within the limits necessarily imposed by existing financial circumstances in relation to capital expenditure. The Committee did not specify whether powers under the National Health Service Act or under the National Assistance Act should be used by local authorities for this purpose. In the case of the tuberculous, one of the main purposes in establishing a hostel may be to supervise and provide appropriate advice for infectious cases so that they adopt proper precautions when at work or mixing in the community, while at the same time a watch is kept on their own health. If this is to be the main purpose of the hostel there are good reasons for proposing that it should be provided as part of the local authority's arrangements for the care and after care of the tuberculous under Section 28 of the National Health Service Act. Use of the same powers to provide for convalescent mental patients a hostel of the sort recommended by the Committee would fit in well with the subsequently published recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Law relating to Mental Illness and Mental Deficiency on the needs of the mentally disordered in the community.

5. In paragraph 119 the Committee say that "it appears that a stage has now been reached where they (local authorities) could with advantage devote some of their resources to providing short-stay hostels". In circular 14/57 relating to local authority services for the chronic sick and infirm the Minister drew attention to the value of short-stay accommodation as a means of helping with the care of old people and expressed the hope that local authorities would extend their arrangements in this direction as their commitments allow. He is sure that authorities will wish to give the same consideration to the needs of the disabled for this form of provision as of the elderly.

6. The Committee recommend in paragraph 110 the nomination by local authorities of a suitable officer to attend hospital case conferences designed to assess the welfare needs of particular patients. This recommendation is linked in part with recommendation 3 in which it is suggested that each major hospital sets up a resettlement clinic. The Minister thinks the approach

in regard to case conferences could most conveniently be made by the hospital authorities and he asks local authorities to consider favourably any requests made to them by Boards of Governors or Regional Hospital Boards (either direct or through Hospital Management Committees) to be represented at these conferences by an appropriate officer. Since these conferences would be concerned only with especially difficult cases they would probably not be held very frequently. A copy of the memorandum which the Minister has sent to hospital authorities on this and other recommendations is enclosed for information. It will be observed that attention has been drawn amongst other things to recommendation 13 relating to prompt notification of discharge from hospitals.

7. In paragraphs 112, 113 and 321 the Committee make some general observations on co-operation including liaison where necessary between the local authority officer responsible for providing a welfare service for a severely handicapped person and his general practitioner. The Minister concurs with what the Committee say but since he has recently referred to this subject in circular 14/57 he does not think he need further allude to it here. He desires however to invite attention to what is said in paragraph 254 of the report as to the importance of close contact between the youth employment service and the local authority welfare department in the case of disabled school leavers and other young disabled persons. He understands that the youth employment service fully accept the need for such contact and that reference to it is included in the memorandum of guidance issued to youth employment officers. The Minister believes however that in a number of areas the full co-operation between the youth employment and the welfare services that is obviously most desirable remains to be developed.

8. A copy of this circular is enclosed for the Council's Chief Welfare Officer. A copy has been sent separately to the Medical Officer of Health.

9. Correspondence from authorities in Wales and Monmouthshire in regard to this circular should be addressed to The Chairman, Welsh Board of Health, Cathays Park, Cardiff.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

J. W. Williams

in regard to case conferences could most conveniently be made by the hospital authorities and the local authorities to consider favourably any requests made to them by Boards of Governors or Regional Hospital Boards (either direct or through Hospital Management Committees) to be represented at these conferences by an appropriate officer. Since the conferences would be concerned only with especially difficult cases they would probably not be held very frequently. A copy of the memorandum which the Minister has sent to hospital authorities on this and other recommendations is enclosed for information. It will be observed that attention has been drawn amongst other things to recommendation 13 relating to provision of discharge from hospitals.

7. In paragraphs 112, 113 and 121 the Committee make some general observations on co-operation including liaison where necessary between the local authority, other responsible for providing a welfare service for a severely handicapped person and his general practitioner. The Minister concurs with what the Committee say but since he has recently referred to this subject in circular 1417 he does not think he need further allude to it here. He desires however to draw attention to what is said in paragraph 121 of the report as to the importance of close contact between the youth employment officer and the local authority welfare department in the case of disabled school leavers and their young disabled persons. He understands that the youth employment service fully accept the need for such contact and that reference to it is included in the memorandum of guidelines issued to youth employment officers. The Minister believes however that in a number of cases the full co-operation between the youth employment and the welfare services that is necessary may desirable remains to be developed.

8. A copy of this circular is enclosed by the County of Glamorgan Council. A copy has been sent separately to the Medical Officer of Health.

9. Correspondence from authorities in Wales and Monmouthshire in regard to this circular should be addressed to The Chairman, Wales Board of Health, Cardiff Park, Cardiff.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

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