



11 June 1996

TO: PS/Baroness Denton (DED)
FROM: Pauline McCloy
Industrial Relations & Equality Division

MEETINGS TO DISCUSS THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE FUTURE OF NORTHERN IRELAND

1. This submission provides updated advice and draft replies to five queries raised at the Europa women's meeting on 14 September 1995. Advice was originally submitted on 12 December 1995. However, given the lapse of time, you asked us last month to seek updated information from Departments.

Levels of Compensation paid to Members of RUC and their Relatives

2. The Secretary of the Disabled Police Officers' Association, Mrs Heather McCready, raised the issue of levels of compensation paid to policemen and women injured in the Troubles and to the relatives of serving officers who had been killed.

Updated details on the scheme and a revised draft reply are at Annex A. (An interim reply as sent on 25 October 1995 and a further one issued on 3 May 1996 following a reminder from Mrs McCready.)

Dyslexia

3. Mrs Kelly, the mother of a dyslexic son, claimed Northern Ireland lagged behind the rest of Great Britain in providing help for dyslexic children; that it is not classed as a special need here and, as a result, does not attract the resources needed. Mrs Kelly is part of a lobby group which has written to Michael Ancram. A background note and amended draft reply, provided by DENI, are at Annex B for the Minister's consideration. (An interim reply was issued to Mrs Kelly on 27 October 1995.)

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cc Secretary
Mr Gibson
Mr Haire
Mr Dunn, NIO
Miss Revels, DHSS
Mr McKeown, DENI
MC
File



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
An Equal Opportunities Organisation



Victims of Sexual Abuse

4. Mrs Anderson, Chairman of NEXUS, brought this issue up and, in particular, the lack of adequate resources available to voluntary organisations, such as NEXUS, which deal with this growing problem. A revised background note and draft reply reflecting the 1995/96 funding position has been provided by DHSS and is attached at Annex C for the Minister's consideration. (An interim reply issued on 24 October 1995.)

Care of the Elderly

5. Care of the elderly was raised by a number of individuals, including Councillor Marian Smith who expressed concern at the reduction in provision of homes for the elderly in the statutory sector. She queried how elderly people could possibly pay for care in the private sector. Since the preparation of the previous response Government has announced changes relating to capital disregard and on 7 May published a UK wide consultation paper detailing proposals to allow people to make financial provision for their old age. A revised background note and draft reply, taking account of these developments, are at Annex D. (An interim reply issued on 27 October.)

Bereavement as a Result of the Troubles

6. Mrs Marian Kane, Ardoyne Association, expressed concern that those who had been bereaved as a result of the Troubles should not be forgotten and that they receive adequate support. An updated background note, taking account of the 1995/96 funding position, and draft reply are at Annex E for the Minister's consideration.
7. It would be helpful if these letters could be issued as soon as possible.

M E P McCloy

M E P McCLOY

LEVELS OF COMPENSATION PAID TO MEMBERS OF THE RUC AND THEIR RELATIVES

BACKGROUND

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme, which is contained in the Criminal Injuries (Compensation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1988, provides a right to claim compensation from the Secretary of State for injury or death caused by violent (including terrorist) offences in Northern Ireland. This scheme applies equally to civilians and to members of the security forces and is administered by the Compensation Agency.

Each case is treated on its individual merits. In cases of bereavement no attempt is made to place a value on human life. Rather the intention of the scheme is to compensate the relative of an innocent victim, who dies as a result of a violent offence, for any expenses incurred or future financial loss as a result of the death. In practice this generally means that, in addition to funeral expenses, the amount of compensation paid is based on an assessment of the victim's earnings at the date of death, less any pensions or benefits payable to the relative as a result of the death.

Moreover a bereavement award of £7,500 (£3,500 if the injury occurred before 1 April 1991) is payable to the spouse of the victim or, where the victim was under 18 years of age and never married, to his or her parents.

In cases where a person has sustained a criminal injury, compensation may be paid for pain, suffering, loss of amenity and financial loss.

The average award under the criminal injuries scheme was approximately £6,000 in 1995/96, but settlements have ranged from the threshold of £1,000 to £650,000.

DRAFT REPLY

Ms Heather McCready
DPOA
Police Authority for Northern Ireland
Seapark
151 Belfast Road
CARRICKFERGUS
Co Antrim
BT38 8PL

June 1996

At the meeting in the Europa Hotel on 14 September to discuss the role of women in the future of Northern Ireland you raised the issue of the levels of compensation paid to policemen and women who have been injured in the Troubles and to relatives of policemen and women who have been murdered. I am sorry it has taken longer than I would have wished to reply.

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme is designed to compensate, both civilians and members of the security forces, for pain, suffering, financial loss and loss of amenity suffered. Claims are determined on individual merits and in accordance with relevant legislation. It is Government policy that innocent victims of violence in Northern Ireland are entitled to fair compensation paid within a reasonable time.

In 1995/96 the average value of settlements was approximately £6,000 although individual awards ranged from the threshold of £1,000 up to £650,000.

In the case of bereavement, the intention of the scheme is to compensate the relative for expenses incurred or future financial loss as a result of the death. No attempt is made to place a value on human life.

I understand that the scheme is generally acknowledged to be one of the most generous statutory compensation schemes in existence anywhere.

May I take the opportunity to thank you for attending the meeting. I hope you found it worthwhile.

BARONESS DENTON OF WAKEFIELD

Minister for Agriculture and the Economy

DYSLEXIA

BACKGROUND NOTE

Definition of "Dyslexia"

1. "Dyslexia" is a term used by many individuals and organisations to describe children who have problems in learning to read or handle numbers despite (a) general intelligence at least within the normal range, (b) a generally supporting environment, and (c) freedom from sensory disabilities which could account for this. This pre-supposes that a single condition or syndrome is always present but the experience of those involved in the education service is that the term describes not just one condition but many and it is therefore more appropriate to refer to "specific learning difficulties" than to dyslexia.

Identification and Provision

2. This handicap has been recognised as a problem in Northern Ireland for many years. It is generic in nature and is not a single condition which can be dealt with in a similar fashion for each pupil. Existing legislation places a duty on Education and Library Boards (ELBs) to identify those children in their areas who have special educational needs and, where appropriate, to carry out assessments of those needs. The law also requires ELBs to make statements where necessary and to arrange the special educational provision specified in those statements. Significant resources have been made available to provide assistance to such children over the last number of years from within and outside the school situation.

- b3. ELBs adopt differing approaches in order to meet the individual needs of this client group, for example, through specialist help from reading units/centres and central literacy teaching/peripatetic services. In addition, support for local primary and secondary (including grammar) schools is provided by an outreach approach. In this particular context many of the permanent teaching posts created recently in the outreach and peripatetic field are in fact concentrating on reading delay. Individual mainstream schools should also be aware of the problems faced by such pupils and the emphasis today is on early diagnosis with a highly structured programme being devised to alleviate their special needs through a variety of teaching methods which best suit the particular child.

Teacher Training

4. All courses of initial teacher training must include an element designed to enable students to develop the capacity to recognise pupils' special educational needs and provide appropriately for these. For serving teachers it is the responsibility of the ELBs to mount in-service courses with similar objectives and some of these are specifically concentrating on new teaching methods eg reading recovery.

Examinations

5. A booklet was published in October 1993 by the GCSE Secretaries Advisory Committee for Candidates with Disabilities entitled "The Effects of Major Categories of Disability on Learning and Assessment". The booklet, copies of which were distributed to all schools in Northern Ireland, gives clear guidance on a practical definition for dyslexia and stresses what particular issues schools should bear in mind in preparing candidates for examinations.

ANNEX B

DRAFT LETTER



June 1996

At the meeting in the Europa Hotel last September to discuss the role of women in Northern Ireland, you raised the issue of dyslexia and how it is dealt with in Northern Ireland. I am sorry it has taken longer than anticipated to reply but I have discussed your concerns with my Ministerial colleague, Michael Ancram, who has responsibility for education matters in Northern Ireland.

I am advised that in Northern Ireland, as elsewhere in the UK, dyslexia is recognised as a specific learning difficulty, affecting children's capacity to read or handle numbers. It is a generic condition, and not one which can be dealt with in a similar fashion for each pupil.

Education and Library Boards have the statutory duty to identify those children in their area who have special educational needs, including dyslexia, and where those needs are severe enough to warrant it, to make formal statements and arrange the special educational provision specified in such statements.

Significant resources have been made available to provide assistance to children with special educational needs over the last number of years both within and outside school. Boards adopt differing approaches in order to

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meet the individual needs of such children. This may take the form of specialist help from reading units/centres; central literacy teaching/peripatetic services; and/or support for local primary and secondary (including grammar) schools operating by means of outreach support from teachers based in special schools. A significant number of additional permanent teaching posts have been created recently in the peripatetic and outreach field to deal specifically with reading delay. The emphasis is very much on early diagnosis, with highly structured programmes being devised which deploy a variety of teaching methods which best suit the particular child.

With regard to teacher training the position is that all courses of initial teacher training must include an element designed to enable students to develop the capacity to recognise pupils' special educational needs and provide appropriately for these. Education and Library Boards run in-service courses for teachers which concentrate on new methods of teaching pupils with special educational needs eg reading recovery. Advice to schools was supplemented by the publication in October 1993 by the GCSE Secretaries Advisory Committee for Candidates with Disabilities of a booklet entitled "The Effects of Major Categories of Disability in Learning and Assessment". Copies were distributed free to all schools in Northern Ireland. This document gives clear guidance on a practical definition for dyslexia and stresses what particular issues schools should bear in mind in preparing candidates for examinations.

I hope this response is helpful and allays the concerns you expressed at the meeting. May I take this opportunity to thank you for attending the meeting. We were delighted that so many women made the time to attend.

BARONESS DENTON OF WAKEFIELD

Minister for the Agriculture and the Economy

ANNEX C

VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

BACKGROUND

Funding for Regional Voluntary Organisations

1. DHSS provides grant aid towards the central administrative costs of regional voluntary organisations tackling sexual abuse and domestic violence. This is in addition to grants from HSS Boards and Trusts for the provision of services.
2. In the last 3 years, DHSS has provided funding as follows:

	Recurrent	Once-Off
Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation		
1993/94	£58,941	
Domestic Violence Helpline		£67,000
Training Programmes		£26,000
1994/95	£61,299	
Domestic Violence Helpline		£12,500
Equipment/Premises		£ 8,180
1995/96	£63,138	
Domestic Violence Helpline		£23,121
Heating Repair Costs		£ 1,377
TOTALS	£183,378	£138,178

	Recurrent	Once-Off
Nexus Institute		
1993/94	£33,227	
Premises		£45,000
Adolescent Project		£25,000
Computerisation		£ 6,500
1994/95	£34,556	
Furnishings and Fittings		£18,000
Business Plan		£ 7,790
1995/96	£50,667	
Senior Tutor Post & Teenage Project		£21,156
Conferences		£ 840
TOTALS	£118,450	£124,286

Belfast Rape Crisis Centre

1993/94	£27,836	-
1994/95	£28,949	-
1995/96	£28,949	-
TOTALS	£85,734	-

ANNEX C

Mrs M E Anderson MBE
Chairman NEXUS
109 University Street
BELFAST 7

June 1996

At the meeting in the Europa Hotel last September to discuss the role of women in Northern Ireland, you raised the issue of the funding of voluntary organisations dealing with sexual abuse. I am sorry it has taken so long to get back to you.

I undertook at that time to reply to you after taking advice from my Ministerial colleague, Mr Malcolm Moss. He has advised that the Department of Health and Social Services provides grant aid towards the central administration and development costs of regional voluntary organisations tackling sexual abuse and domestic violence.

The amounts paid have increased steadily in recent years. Last year, three organisations, including Nexus, received a total of £142,754 towards recurrent running costs. Over the past three years, the same organisations received once-off payments towards special projects, buildings and equipment, totalling £262,464. I understand that this includes £45,000 paid to the Nexus Institute in 1993/94 for the acquisition of new premises.

These amounts are in addition to the grants and contracts payable by Health and Social Services Boards and Trusts for work with the survivors of violence and abuse at the local level. I have been advised that you have recently received funding from the Eastern Health and Social Services Board for your Crisis Counsellor post and towards your new premises.

As far as the Nexus Institute is concerned, I understand that you have been working with the Department and its professional advisers and have developed a business plan and fundraising strategy with the aim of addressing your increasing workload more effectively and reducing waiting times.

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I hope this letter adequately addresses the issues you raised at the meeting. I hope you found your attendance at the meeting to be useful.

BARONESS DENTON OF WAKEFIELD
Minister for the Economy and Agriculture

CARE OF THE ELDERLY


BACKGROUND

1. The Government's present charging policy for long-term residential care has become one of the highest priority concerns among elderly people and their relatives. It is based on a means test which under most circumstances treats the home as an asset available to pay for care. As a consequence many home owners have to sell their houses to help to pay for residential care while people with no assets or savings are paid for by the taxpayer.
2. The charging policy has been in operation for many years. But until relatively recently its operation tended to be obscured by the widespread availability of long stay geriatric hospital accommodation and by less transparent charging arrangements than exist now.
3. A number of changes relating to capital disregards were announced by the Chancellor in the Budget in November. These changes came into effect in April and enable people in residential and nursing home care to keep more of their savings.
4. A UK-wide consultation paper was published on 7 May detailing Government proposals to enable people to make financial provision for their old age. The consultation paper considers the financial problems many people face - including disposal of their property - if they ever need long term care in residential or nursing homes. The Government wants to encourage people to make provision for their own long term care needs, and to stimulate the financial services industry to offer attractive products to enable them to do so. Comments on the proposals have been invited by 14 June.

ANNEX D

DRAFT REPLY

Councillor Marianne Smith



June 1996

At the meeting in the Europa Hotel last September to discuss the role of women in Northern Ireland, you raised the issue of how elderly people could pay for care in the private sector, particularly those without the financial means to do so. I am sorry it has taken longer than expected to get back to you.

A national system for charging people placed in residential care has been in operation since 1948. The system is based on a means test and, while I fully appreciate the concerns expressed at the meeting about the treatment of owner occupied property under the system, the Government considers it reasonable that residents who are able to contribute towards the cost of their accommodation and living expenses should do so. Equally then residents who have no assets or savings will have their expenses paid for by the taxpayer.

I am pleased to tell you that changes to the charging system on the treatment of capital, which came into effect on 8 April, will enable people in residential and nursing home care to keep more of their savings.

You may also be interested to know that the Government recently published a Consultation Document entitled "A New Partnership for Care in Old Age"

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which seeks views on proposals for the future provision of long term care with particular emphasis on extending the range of choices available to cover the cost of such care. The document has been sent to interested organisations throughout the United Kingdom and comments were invited by 14 June.

May I take the opportunity to thank you for attending the meeting in Belfast. I hope you agree with me that it was a most worthwhile event.

BARONESS DENTON OF WAKEFIELD

Minister for the Economy and Agriculture

BEREAVEMENT AS A RESULT OF THE TROUBLES

BACKGROUND

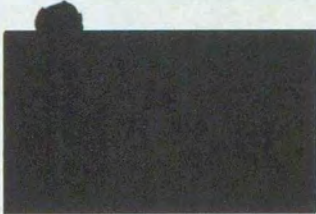
Government recognises that people who have suffered bereavements as a result of the Troubles need to be helped. Accordingly, it lends its support to CRUSE Bereavement Care (Northern Ireland), an organisation which offers one-to-one counselling for all bereaved people in 8 centres based in Belfast, Londonderry, Causeway, North Down and Ards, Antrim/Ballymena area, Armagh/Dungannon, Omagh and Enniskillen.

The organisation may also offer support in groups and can provide practical advice on a wide range of issues including legal matters, welfare benefits, finance and housing. In addition, CRUSE holds literature and materials on counselling and grief processes and offers training in counselling and the theories of loss and grief.

The Department of Health and Social Services gives a core grant to the CRUSE (Northern Ireland) Headquarters. In 1994/95 this amounted to £24,923. During that year the Department also allocated £10,000 to the organisation's Headquarters from the £1 million fund announced by the Secretary of State in October 1994 to help people affected by violence. A further £30,000 from that fund was paid to the Belfast Branch of CRUSE through the Eastern Health and Social Services Board. During the 1995/96 DHSS provided funding totalling £33,326.

DRAFT REPLY

ANNEX E



June 1996

At the meeting in the Europa Hotel in September last you expressed concern about those who had lost loved ones during the Troubles and the need to ensure that such people are not forgotten and receive the support they need.

The need for help for people who have suffered such bereavements has been recognised by means of Government support for CRUSE Bereavement Care (Northern Ireland) which offers one-to-one counselling for all bereaved people in 8 centres based in Belfast, Londonderry, Causeway, North Down and Ards, Antrim/Ballymena area, Armagh/Dungannon, Omagh and Enniskillen. The organisation may also offer support in groups and can provide practical advice on a wide range of issues including legal matters, welfare benefits, finance and housing. CRUSE hold literature and materials on counselling and grief processes and offers training in counselling and the theories of loss and grief.

This valuable work is supported through a core grant to the CRUSE (Northern Ireland) Headquarters from the Department of Health and Social Services which in 1994/95 amounted to £24,923. During that year the Department also allocated £10,000 to the organisation's Headquarters from the £1 million fund announced by the Secretary of State in October 1994 to help people affected by violence. A further £30,000 from that Fund was paid to the Belfast Branch of CRUSE through the Eastern Health and Social Board.

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I hope you will agree that this level of support for CRUSE Bereavement Care (Northern Ireland) shows that the Government is aware of the needs of those who have been bereaved as a result of the Troubles and is taking steps to have those needs addressed.

Thank you very much for attending the meeting and for expressing your views. I hope you found the evening worthwhile.

BARONESS DENTON OF WAKEFIELD

Minister for the Economy and Agriculture