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FIELD OFFICER

This Association is now eleven years old and the emphasis of need has changed over the years. Included with these notes are some general pamphlets about the work of the Association.

The Field Officer appointed will operate throughout working from home, in the first instance, and being responsible to the Chief Executive Officer through the Liaison Officer.

It will be necessary to have such experience and education as to enable the Officer to communicate readily with professionals and volunteers, of all disciplines, who are concerned with serving and supporting the disabled. In addition there must be an outstanding ability to relate to the families of disabled persons and the disabled themselves.

There are a number of Local Associations functioning in the area of appointment. These have been in existence for periods of up to eleven years. The Field Officer will be expected to support these Local Associations in the entire range of their work on behalf of families and disabled individuals and to involve the general public in the interest of Local Associations, aiming to harness all the available services.

The work cannot be confined to day-time hours and ownership of a car will be necessary in order to meet demands during evenings and weekends. Appropriate free time will be allowed.

The commencing salary will be not less than £3,500 per annum. A car allowance, travelling expenses and payment for office accommodation at home will be made. A telephone meter will be installed by the Association and half the telephone rental will be paid.

Annual holiday will be 20 working days plus statutory Bank Holidays.

After 15 weeks employment there is a sick pay entitlement on a sliding scale relative to length of service. The Association is a member of the Social Workers' Pension Fund, contributory, and an appropriate pension plan can be arranged.

The normal retirement age is 60 years for female staff and 65 years for male staff and following a probationary period of three months, the post is subject to three months notice on either side.

Applications marked CONFIDENTIAL should be returned to the Chief Executive Officer at the above address by

FIELD OFFICERS

I wish to refer to the attached paper since I have welcomed Miss Bell's comments on the respective roles of Social Workers and Field Officers.

I had thought that the role of our Social Workers was clear. Their involvement in general support had to be limited, not because of lack of ability, but by lack of time. However, I have realised that there is not a general pattern of behaviour by the Social Workers in their work. Discussion might commence from the assumption that Field Officers will not assume the mantle of 'case worker' whilst Social Workers might do any task undertaken by a Field Officer; although it could be an unsatisfactory use of limited time for tasks to be undertaken which belong rightly to other professionals or could be performed by 'professional' volunteers, such as solicitors, accountants, architects, etc.

I expect the Field Officers to become fully informed on resources throughout the area in which they work, knowing hospitals, schools, colleges, day centres, D.H.S.S. Officers, Social Service Departments, Education Departments, Careers Officers, employment facilities, residential provisions and all the voluntary service organisations - British Red Cross, St. John, Lions, Toc H, Rotary, Inner Wheel, Round Table, Ladies' Circles, Seroptomists, Etc. Assuming that the Field Officers do become information and resource agencies, then I should expect our Social Workers to use them as much as I hope the statutory authorities will do. At the personal level I expect the Field Officers to relate individuals to the professional who has a responsibility such as Social Worker, Careers Adviser, etc.

Our Social Workers complement and might duplicate the work of the statutory officers, whilst the Field Officer must avoid this. The Local Associations were formed to serve and support, and I emphasise that a Field Officer is not able to do anything better than the good local volunteer. He or she will just have more time and acquire vast experience through effort.

Reverting to Miss Bell's comments - para. 2 is not correct. As a main task, helping Local Associations is possible only when an invitation is given.

I agree with 3(a) - see above
and with 3(b)
and with 4(a)

4(b) is wholly 'Social Worker' using the Field Officer for support.

4(c) is wholly 'Field Officer'.

4(d) - I agree.

Field Officers will come from a variety of disciplines and with varied past experience. Each will have different strengths and weaknesses, and I accept my responsibility is to create a team. It would have been easy for me to ask for a large number of officers I do not think enough money is forthcoming for this, and I have always believed that there are able volunteers in every community whom we should utilise.

Field Officers' role.

1. Represent the Association at all levels.
2. Serve and support - Local Associations
(Families) usually by ensuring the services
Individuals) available are utilised.
3. Help in formation of new Associations.
4. Educate the public.
5. Involve more members of the public in our work.
6. Relate constantly to professionals and voluntary organisation members in the interest of the disabled whom we serve.
7. Good relationships should be the motto.
8. Fund-raising is an incidental and a bonus.

It might be advantageous for **only** tentative consideration to be given at present to further Field Officer appointments, chiefly because the Social Worker scheme development ought to be considered at the same time.

FIELD OFFICERS

The role of a Field Officer means different things to a variety of people despite the various papers which have been published during the past six years and the many occasions that these officers' duties have been considered by Council, Executive Committee and Local Associations. So far as the latter are concerned there is often not a lack of understanding but the desire to use any source of help which might be available.

I cannot report that the appointments made to date have been an unqualified success because there will be people throughout the areas served who would say that the Field Officer has not succeeded in the task for which the appointment was made.

I have felt throughout my service that the Local Associations did not utilize the services which were available to them in their own neighbourhood. The Field Officers have made a great deal of improvement in this area and the work of the Association is known to Government departments, local authorities, schools, hospitals and health centres because of notifications made regarding the appointments and of visits undertaken. There have been numerous invitations to talk to individuals, groups and to the 'service' organisations.

It is easy to understand the reasons for Local Associations' resistance to intrusion. Most are very proud of their achievements and resent any implication that they might have achieved more, and have given a better service, had they been prepared to share their load with others who did not have personal involvement with the disabled. The Field Officers have had to tread very carefully in the areas where Local Associations are strong because it was essential that those who have done so much should not be alienated but encouraged to see where improvements might be made.

In areas where the Association is not strong the Field Officers have achieved most. However, a large proportion of this work might be termed 'welfare'.

Each Field Officer is located in an area where there is a minimum of twelve hundred families. Visiting all is an impossibility yet visiting some has been a necessary part of induction and training. The Field Officers have accepted that they cannot give an extensive service to families but must use immediately the statutory provisions. There has been success in this direction.

The duties of the Field Officers cannot be made precise. Each of those appointed is different in their experience, personality and qualities. Each one has a strength which will improve the work of the Association throughout the country. In future appointments should be made with the emphasis on finding a person of maturity and wide understanding of people of all ages, with as broad an experience as possible, without there being any emphasis on a particular discipline. Placing the next

people to be appointed will present a problem because each of those we have in position at present is working from home and their locations are not ideal.

It will be recalled that I did express in the earliest days of consideration of the appointments of the Field Officers a preference for appointments in the areas where the families were badly served by local provisions. The northern counties and the eastern counties remain in need of such support.

THE ROLES OF SOCIAL WORKERS AND FIELD OFFICERS

It appears to me that in order to help establish good co-operation between Field Workers and Social Workers, the Welfare Committee ought to give some thought to clarifying their respective roles and I have put down a few thoughts which might perhaps contribute to discussion by the Welfare Committee.

While certain areas of work clearly belong to one group or the other, there is also an area of overlap where co-operation is essential and some clarification of roles necessary.

1. Social Worker's main task

To support families in coping with the stress caused by handicaps and with its effect on family relations, to help parents make constructive plans for the welfare of their children and to offer help to the handicapped child in coming to terms with his disability.

These tasks require:

- (a) Some skill in establishing and sustaining, helpful relationships and some ability to recognise pathological reactions to stress and the symptoms of imminent breakdown.
- (b) A working knowledge of the national and regional financial and practical services available to the handicapped.
- (c) Some ability in working with small groups.

2. Field Officer's main task

Is this primarily to help the Local Associations with their organisational problems? Does this involve committee procedures, boundaries, finance, the selection of projects, and relationships with other organisations?

3. Areas of overlap

(a) Welfare work

While the Social Worker should have an expert knowledge of statutory and voluntary sources of help, I think that many Social Workers would need to draw on Mr. Macfarlane's business expertise and that of his colleagues when dealing with problems of housing and car purchase.

(b) Projects

I expect the Field Officers would be concerned with helping Local Associations to establish projects, dealing with problems of finance, premises, equipment, etc. Where a Social Worker has appropriate interest and experience, her role might be, in co-operation with others, to run small groups, activity groups, workshops, therapeutic groups, etc. & play groups etc. This is an important aspect of social work.

4. Liaison with Statutory Authorities and Voluntary Agencies.

This seems to me an area where there is need for discussion and clarification of roles :

- (a) When a new appointment is pending it would be the task of the Head Social Worker to meet the Director of Social Services, or a Deputy responsible for handicapped people to discuss co-operation, he would also make contact with community physicians, senior Education Officers and local Social Workers in hospital.
- (b) Subsequently the Social Worker would have an ongoing relationship with other Social Workers and Officers dealing with social security, education and employment in relation to individual cases. As an outside 'specialist' she would have access to workers at different levels in the local authority area team and, where necessary, to senior officers with special responsibilities.
- (c) Liaison between the Local Associations and voluntary organisations and local authorities in connection with the financing of projects would, I assume, be one of the tasks of the Field Officers.
- (d) Where the Local Association wishes to act as a pressure group to improve local services, they might seek the help of the Field Officer, while the Social Worker would help individual families in their dealings with tribunals, rent officers, etc.

These matters seem to need discussion by the staff concerned at their group meetings and no doubt there would need to be flexibility and sharing of tasks.