

REPORT OF LIAISON OFFICER

16th June 1973.

I regret to have to report a real disappointment in that the Oxford Association has ceased to exist as a functioning unit. I had done a certain amount of work in the hope of involving more people. I had failed to make progress and we were relying on one person who could not continue. However, I hope that through my contacts with the Council for Social Service and the Association for the Disabled that we shall be able to extend our services to those with Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus, in due course reforming our Local Association.

Whilst my admiration for the work of the Local Associations continues I should be unrealistic if I did not level some criticism. There is little evidence of notice being taken of the paper on the role of the Local Association which Miss Oughtred presented last year. Where new officers have been appointed, the memorandum on this subject has not been read. This has meant that progress towards greater maturity has been slow and parents with older children are likely to leave the Association. In three cases such parents have raised with me the subject of their children's future and said the Local Association is geared only to those with babies. I have been able to disabuse them so far as the National position is concerned and I look forward to the new film being available because there is a tendency for the Local Associations to show the films at present available more frequently than would appear reasonable.

I believe that the Local Associations must become more objective if the parents I have mentioned are to receive real benefit. I hope such maturity is achieved through retaining these members, as well as older people with spina bifida and hydrocephalus, and involving more people from the general public.

I have noted an appreciable weariness on the part of the families with older children evidenced by readiness to consider attendance at boarding establishments, although there continues to be a desire for contact with the able bodied.

Large sums of money remain on deposit and current accounts with clearing banks. Perhaps some consideration could be given to this matter by the Council. I believe that were there to be a major project envisaged then the Local Associations would be glad to contribute as they have to the Research Fellowship.

REPORT TO NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

The present approach to money might be interpreted as further evidence of immaturity. Requests for many items from the results of the Magpie Appeal indicate areas of need which could have been met by Local Associations which have raised money for these precise purposes. Much time spent on money raising, the reason for which is clear, could be used better and there is a wide field for using the expertise of the Appeal Committee as well as greater co-ordination of activities nationally.

Co-operation between neighbouring Associations is a field where there must be improvement so that approaches to the enlarged Local Authorities are more effective by not being fragmented.

I see evidence of a need for our Association to attain a teaching role amongst health visitors, social workers and teachers. Conferences have already been held for such persons and more could be envisaged. In addition, there is a need to inform potential employers and their employees so that more ready acceptance of the disabled is achieved. Here it means business men will be required to talk to their like at local as well as national level. In discussing these wide aspects of the Association's work with officers of Local Associations it has been said that it would be preferable for there to be more professionals employed nationally who would have referred to them problems of welfare, education, training and employment for attention. I have been told that Local Associations would be glad to contribute funds for such salaries because the members would realise the benefits to be gained.