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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY

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From the Secretary of State for Social Services

The Rt Hon Malcolm Rifkind MP
Secretary of State for Scotland
Scottish Office
Dover House
Whitehall
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SW1A 2AU

13 October 1987

Dear Malcolm

COMMUNITY CHARGE EXEMPTIONS

Thank you for your letter of ¹³28 September about the payment of fees to GPs for issuing community charge exemption certificates to severely mentally handicapped people.

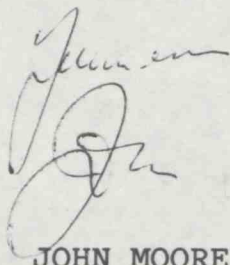
I agree that there are many circumstances where GPs are obliged to issue certificates free of charge under their Terms of Service but these are generally confined to mainstream health or social security work. Normally, where a certificate is issued for other purposes this is treated as a private transaction between the GP, the individual and the authority concerned. I consider that the closest parallels would be in connection with "orange badge" car stickers or housing priority lists. In both cases the local authority reimburses the GP and the individual pays nothing. This is a common situation. I thus wish to maintain the position I outlined to colleagues in my letter of 30 July that GPs will require payment for providing exemption certificates.

Local authority reimbursement to GPs will also tie in well with the data requirements for the new grant system. Both the Scottish Office and each local authority will need to know how many severely mentally handicapped persons have been exempted in order to establish the appropriate population base for grant entitlements. An effective mechanism for reimbursing GPs can thus be integrated with the collection of this information.

E.R.

In relation to your other point on whether or not Severe Disablement Allowance should be a requirement for exemption on grounds of severe mental handicap, I can quite see why you would not wish to amend primary legislation for such a minor issue. I am content to note that you will be giving guidance to doctors that receipt of SDA will be a relevant factor.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister, the Lord President, members of E(LF) and Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John Moore', written in a cursive style.

JOHN MOORE

LOCAL GOVT: Rating PTB.

