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HOME NEWS

Warnings may bring councils into line on aid for disabled

By Pat Healy

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Many local authorities are not implementing the Act passed nearly three years ago to help disabled people, a report published today says. But pressure by the Government on one of the defaulting authorities may help to bring the others into line.

A survey on the implementation of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons' Act shows that a third of the local authorities covered have no plans to implement the vital first section, which lays a duty on local authorities to identify their disabled residents and inform them of services available to them.

The section is widely regarded as crucial to implementing the rest of the Act because, it is argued, councils cannot plan services until they know how many disabled people they have and who they are.

As reported in *The Times* of March 27, Cornwall County Council, which appeared to regard the section as discretionary, has been told that it is a duty by Mr Alison, an Under Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Security. He has given a warning that he will be watching developments.

The survey, conducted by Social Policy Research Ltd and commissioned by the National Fund for Research Into Crippling Diseases, disclosed wide variations between similar local authorities. It is bound to lead to renewed pressure for the Government to publish information on how local authorities are implementing the Act. The Prime Minister had refused to allow such information to be released because he believed it would lead to meaningless comparisons.

The survey, which does not identify individual councils, covered 42 local authorities in England and Wales with a combined population of 24 million. It found that two years after the Act was passed only 17 per cent more people had been

added to disabled registers. More than 800,000 severely and appreciably handicapped people who need support had still to be identified by social services departments.

Expenditure on home helps varied from £32 to £122 for every 100 people, with two neighbouring counties spending £73 and £37 respectively. Adaptations to houses cost from £8 to £100 a thousand of population, while the number of meals on wheels varied from two to 20 a thousand. Telephones, regarded as a lifeline for disabled people in some areas, were provided for six to 150 people in every 100,000.

The report says that the chance of getting services depended on how much people could pay and where they lived. A major adaptation to a disabled person's house might cost nothing or 5p in the pound of his net disposable income.

"The anomalies within local departments are even more absurd when a comparison is made with procedures for some very similar services provided, usually free, under the National Health Service", it says.

The report recommends that the Department of Health and Social Security should publish more comparative information as a first step to force councils that do not make adequate provision to justify their positions. *The Implementation of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act.* (Action Research for the Crippled Child, Vincent House, 1 Springfield Road, Horsham, Sussex. £2).

Community work: A nationwide campaign to get tens of thousands of young people to take part in sponsored community work is being launched this summer by Outset, the fund-raising charity for the single homeless.

A pilot project in Oxford has raised £600 for a local charity working with single homeless people, after 120 students worked on a variety of projects.

Crossword regional final



receiving a sprig of heather from an air hostess yesterday before fly-
 donian Airways' inaugural scheduled service.

Labour spells out plans to heather a viable region

Local elections

John Chartres

106 seats. The Conservatives are contesting 101. The Liberals say that if their organization were bigger and better able to take advantage of the national desire for a "third political force" demonstrated in recent parliamentary by-elections, they would have been contesting more seats. There will also be communist candidates, but their number is unknown.

The communists are calling for the building of more council houses and free public transport.

tentions only in broad terms. thought it morally wrong to promise too much in detail at this stage, and in any case one can start working out detailed plans until the experienced full-time officers have been appointed and given time to offer their advice.

"We feel the general climate of the country is favourable to us. I think it is going to be a very interesting election. It could well be that no single party will have overall control. That might be a bad thing in one way but it can have its advantages as well, particularly during a settling in period."

The Liberals have also written out their policy in fairly broad terms. One of their main proposals is for the appointment of a director of development.