

Foreword

This report is one of a series from the Committee appointed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to study relations between local and central government. When we took up our task, we were all aware that recent years had shown large changes at the interface between council offices and Whitehall; but we decided to ask our research officer to record and summarise those changes, so that we could take an overall look at them. This brought home to us the great number of the new initiatives which have affected local government – and the consequent inevitability of stress, as both sides try to deal their implications. We thought that a wider public would be interested to see Peter John's record, and we are delighted to publish it in this form. Inevitably – such is the pace of events – it will be slightly out of date before it is published: for instance, the government appears at the time of writing to be committed to urgent measures to soften the impact of the community charge, and such measures, undertaken in a hurry, can hardly fail to imply more central money and therefore more pressure on local authorities to conform with the norms of spending. But we shall all have better insight into any further changes if we have an accurate knowledge of the great changes already made. We hope, therefore, that the publication of this review will contribute to the making of wise policy.

Charles Carter