

six months the funding was taken over by the NHS. The report had made the precise needs of families more explicit and this contributed to the increased acknowledgment by senior medical and managerial staff that such a post was vital.

#### PRACTICAL SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

19. A video was made by the Heart Circle for parents to introduce them to the Unit and the people they would meet when their child was admitted. This was sent out with the admission letters so that they could watch this in their homes and returned by the parents on admission. A copy was retained by the Audit Commission Library as an example of good practice.
20. The first major project undertaken by the Heart Circle was to identify a property where parents could stay while their child was in hospital. It took Dr Jordan and I almost six years of discussion with hospital management before they accepted the need but in 1978 a small house belonging to the hospital was given over. This was completely refurbished and furnished by the Heart Circle and opened in 1978 and I believe was the first such accommodation in the country.
21. Demand for this was so great that a year later the house next door was similarly opened and shortly after that a third house, making twelve rooms in all.
22. In the early years these houses were managed by the Warden of the Nurses Home which was an excellent arrangement and ensured that families on the Cardiac Surgery Unit were accommodated. However, later the management was taken over by the Children's Hospital which meant

that parents on that Unit were not given the priority intended and I had to undertake hard negotiations to enable the six bedroomed house to be handed over for families on the Cardiac Surgery Unit. This was another example of the lack of co-operation between the two sites.

23. The Heart Circle continued to keep these houses in good maintenance although later the two smaller houses were little used by the Children's Hospital as the Heart Circle had been instrumental in the provision of two purpose built blocks of bedrooms and the refurbishment of other accommodation in the Children's Hospital itself. However, the largest house continued to be used for parents on Ward 5 until the transfer. We also negotiated the provision of two bedrooms along the corridor from the Unit for parents at the time of surgery and again all costs were undertaken by the Heart Circle.
24. Although this accommodation was meant to enable families of children with heart conditions who came from distant parts to stay near the hospital this was not always the case. It was understood that as the houses were hospital property there could not be exclusive use: as it was also important that the occupancy rate was high: but because they were funded by the Heart Circle, and our families had particular problems, they would be given some priority. This was the original agreement under which the Heart Circle funded these rooms but regular changes in their management at Bristol Children's Hospital meant that this principle was not followed and this caused concern.
25. Prior to the provision of these rooms families stayed in bed and breakfast accommodation, some a long distance from the hospitals and