

Mental Health Emergency Committee

It will be remembered that this Committee was formed in January, 1939, consisting of representatives of the following organisations :

Central Association for Mental Welfare;
Child Guidance Council;
National Council for Mental Hygiene;
Association of Mental Health Workers;
Association of Psychiatric Social Workers.

with Mrs. Montagu Norman as Chairman and Miss Evelyn Fox as Hon. Secretary.

Now that the "Emergency", the possibility of which brought the Committee into being, has unhappily come to pass, its work is assuming greater and greater importance and the needs it foreshadowed are gradually disclosing themselves.

The Register of Full-Time Social Workers in Mental Health contains, at the time of writing, 217 names; of the workers so registered 96 hold the Certificate of the London School of Economics Mental Health Course, and the majority of the others have had training and experience as members of the staffs of Voluntary Associations for Mental Welfare. Approximately 25 workers have notified that they are free to take up fresh posts by reason of the fact that the war has brought their present employment to an end, either permanently or temporarily.

In addition a Register has been compiled of trained and experienced Voluntary Mental Health Workers (many of whom have retired from paid posts on marriage, change of circumstances, etc.). The Committee is also, through the C.A.M.W.'s Registers, in touch with other types of Mental Health workers, e.g., occupational therapists, teachers of difficult and defective children, educational psychologists, etc.

The work of the Committee has been cordially approved by the various Government Departments concerned. The Board of Control, after receiving a Deputation, issued a special Circular to all Local Authorities, Mental Deficiency Committees, Joint Committees and Boards, and the Visiting Committees of Mental Hospitals, drawing attention to the necessity for facilitating any redistribution of Mental Health workers required by war conditions, and instructing the Authorities concerned to obtain information about the Committee's Register for the purpose of enrolling any of their employees coming within its scope. The Board of Education in their Circular on the Education of Evacuated School Children in Time of Emergency (No. 1469) referred to the Register and to the Clearing House of Information which is being instituted by the Committee (see below).

Contacts have also been established with the Association of Education Committees, the County Councils' Association, the Association of Municipal Corporations, and the Mental Hospitals' Association, all of whom welcome its existence.

The Committee is anxious to assist Local Education Authorities, Billeting Officers and Voluntary Organisations such as the newly created Citizens' Advice Bureaux, the local branches of the Women's Voluntary Services for Civil Defence, as well as individual social workers, by giving advice and help in dealing with the following types of cases:—

- (a) Defective, epileptic and difficult children placed in unsuitable billets and needing skilled handling and specially chosen foster-homes.
- (b) Adult defectives and mentally subnormal or unbalanced individuals impossible to manage by those unaccustomed to them and now left stranded owing to the break up of their family group.
- (c) Psychoneurotics and senile old people whose presence is adding an intolerable burden to relatives struggling with war-time worries and responsibilities.
- (d) Patients prematurely discharged from Mental Hospitals which have been appropriated for other purposes, and those in attendance at Mental Treatment Clinics which have been closed.

For this purpose the Committee is prepared to lend for a limited period to any Education Authority or voluntary organisation, in an area where these special problems are found to be acute, the services of an experienced Mental Health Social Worker or of an Educational Psychologist, and a Circular has recently been issued to Education Committees and Billeting Officers throughout the country explaining the nature of the facilities which are offered.

A leaflet for general distribution has also been published drawing attention to the special need for Mental Health work at this time and offering advice and information as to ways of dealing with individual cases.

A Clearing House of Information on cases is in process of being instituted, by means of which, information may be made available to local authorities, organisations, relatives and friends with regard to mentally defective, subnormal or unstable adults and children in need of help in areas to which they have been evacuated or have come for purposes of employment.

The Committee is appointing in each of the eleven Civil Defence Regions into which England and Wales have been divided, a Regional Representative to whom enquiries on social problems connected with Mental Health, or on individual cases, may be referred by the Regional Commissioner, the Liaison Officer of the National Council for Social Service (see page 111) or by any individual or voluntary society. Up to the time of writing, the following have kindly consented to serve:—

<i>Region 1.</i>	Northumberland, Durham, N. Riding ...	Alderman W. Locke, 47 Red Hall Drive, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 7.
<i>Region 3.</i>	Derby, Nottingham, Lincolnshire, Leicester, Northampton, Rutland, Soke of Peterborough.	Councillor Miss Fortey, J.P., 31 Meadhurst Road, Leicester.
<i>Region 4.</i>	Cambridge, Isle of Ely, Huntingdon, East and West Suffolk, Bedford, Hertford, Norfolk, Essex.	Mrs. Adrian, J.P., 48 Grange Road, Cambridge.
<i>Region 5.</i>	London and Middlesex	Miss Evelyn Fox, C.B.E., 24 Buckingham Palace Road, S.W.1.
<i>Region 6.</i>	Oxford, Bucks, Berks, Surrey, Hampshire, Isle of Wight.	Dame Ellen Pinsent, Rough Lea, Boar's Hill, Oxford.
<i>Region 7.</i>	Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wilts, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall	Mrs. J. C. Hurle, J.P., Kilve Court, Bridgwater, Som.

Further appointments are in process of being made.

Copies of the Committee's leaflet will gladly be supplied to any reader of "Mental Welfare" who can make good use of them. Applications for these, or enquiries for further information, should be addressed to Miss Evelyn Fox, 24 Buckingham Palace Road, S.W.1.

To Our Readers

Owing to increase in the costs of production, it may be necessary in future to make some modifications in the size and form of this magazine, but we can assure our readers that, *given their continued support*, its publication will continue. Its value as a link between mental health workers of all types scattered throughout the country, and as a medium of information on subjects of concern to them, would seem likely to be enhanced during a period when many such workers are more than usually isolated and when the problems with which they are confronted are both new and insistent.

Subscribers are therefore earnestly requested to renew their subscriptions as and when they become due. Prompt renewal will be particularly helpful in that it will enable an accurate estimate to be made before the publication of each issue as to the number of copies required, thus saving unnecessary expense as well as conserving paper supplies