

II—LOCAL HEALTH AUTHORITY PROVISION FOR COMMUNITY CARE WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE ADULT TRAINING CENTRE*

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Subnormals in community care cover the whole range from high-grade to the very low grades and the Local Authority programme must make provision for all of them. Early diagnosis followed by appropriate care and training is essential, and it can be adequately shown that the earlier the diagnosis and the better the care and training, the more full, active, independent and happy will be the adult life of the subnormal. Many can be helped to be completely self-supporting, others at least partially so, which for them and to their parents is an achievement of significance. Some will be unable to progress so far, but they can be greatly assisted and trained to do as much as possible for themselves.

In the past tremendous strain has been placed on families by the need for constant attention and care for many subnormals, but experience has shown that most of them can be taught at least to help about the house, to care for themselves and to acquire the ability to occupy themselves, and indeed for many to live an active social life. Social outings, annual camps, holidays and club activities are an integral part of the local authority programme for both junior and adult subnormals.

In the local authority training begins early, in the home, with advice and help to the parents, and at school age with the Junior Occupation Centres, some of which have a nursery block. In these centres the subnormal is progressively taught within his limitations to develop an acceptable social behaviour pattern. Much time is spent on habit and sense training and on the development of muscle co-ordination. Group activities help to develop social senses and to use simple skills. Participation in the domestic work of the centre, particularly in table laying, meal serving and washing up help to develop skills useful at home and to develop self-esteem and personal satisfaction. As the child grows older the training includes handicrafts, developing progressively, e.g., from simple cross stitch on linden canvas to quite complicated embroidery. It is essential to ensure that the child progresses in a regular pattern along a progressive scheme adequately prepared beforehand. Each child must be taught to do this task properly with a good "finish" before going on to the next stage. Responsibility according to mental and practical ability does stimulate the child into greater and better effort.

Encouragement in this way should be continued and enlarged by giving longer and bigger tasks, more freedom in movement, materials, etc., and wherever possible by stimulating subnormals to use their initiative. It is found that although these children may develop slowly they usually respond to the same sort of encouragement, competition and stimuli as do normal children.

In the last two years or so it is usually possible to assess which children may be able to try outside employment, either in sheltered or ordinary conditions. The Mental Welfare Officers have a good liaison with local industry and a wide know-

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ledge of types of work available and jobs suitable for adult subnormals. This, with the present employment conditions, has made it possible to obtain work in industry for a high proportion of the subnormals in our care, even with some sheltering of employment conditions where necessary.

Centres for the care and training of adults require a broad range of activities, since it is necessary for the local authority to make this provision for all adults who require it irrespective of their working abilities. The size of the centre must depend on the population to be served, and in assessing the numbers likely to attend, due allowance must be made for possible fluctuations from variations in the local industrial employment levels.

A comprehensive scheme for adults includes some provision at occupation centre level which may be required for a few, a training section in which the individual is trained to employ his limited ability to the best advantage, and a section in which some may be trained specifically for outside employment.

Though the requirements of each section may vary, the training section is always the largest, and many severely handicapped people can be usefully and gainfully employed in it. So much is this so that in eight years experience of a training centre we have only found two trainees, both females, who could not be usefully employed.

For those in training specifically for outside employment it is necessary to set up a workshop with industrial type machinery, e.g., on the lines of the Ministry of Labour rehabilitation and training centres (of which one may in fact make considerable use). If the co-operation of industry can be obtained to absorb after training those who have reached a good standard, one may be able to borrow or buy similar machinery for training purposes, and to simulate very closely actual factory conditions. Because of limited numbers it may be convenient to combine this workshop with the training centre where the numbers will be much higher.

In a training workshop for the adult subnormal it is essential to foster the idea that the trainees are now at work and to stimulate as far as practicable industrial conditions.

It is usual for transfer from a junior centre to take place at or about the age of 16 years, depending largely on the degree of physical maturity. There should be no fixed age of entry. To stimulate the feeling of work rather than play or school, it is best to have the adult centre entirely separate and away from the junior centre and to change from school hours to something much nearer ordinary working hours. The work day should not be less than from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and those attending should be encouraged to wear overalls. Holidays with pay should be near industrial length, about four weeks in the year, taken as two weeks in the summer and one each at Christmas and Easter. The centre should close at those times.

All people attending should receive a basic wage which should be either a daily or hourly rate which, apart from being like industry, can be used to discourage those who do not attend regularly. The wage should be made up in pay packets and handed over properly. The basic wage should be paid, irrespective of whether the trainee can work or not, and ability to work is not a necessary criterion for admission to a local authority workshop for adult subnormals. Increases in the basic rates are given as an incentive according to the general development of an individual's skills.

Adult subnormals respond well to the usual stimuli of responsibility, incentives, competition and promotion. They should be graded and paid according to their

skill and industry, and promoted to be in charge of a team or to be foreman over a number of people or teams and, of course, paid more. Just as transfer from "school" to "work"—in terms of a junior centre to an adult centre—can have tremendously beneficial psychological effects on older subnormals, so can promotion which can lead to greatly improved effort and performance.

Competition between teams of workers doing the same job (such as producing picnic baskets) to see who can produce most each week or for the team to beat its own production record using wall charts to show weekly production) can be very effective. In basketry it is easy to train each member of the team to produce complete baskets or to form a production chain, with each member doing part of the work and then passing it on to another for the next stage, like a production line in industry.

Many of the trainees can use ordinary machinery and they are not accident prone. It is found that they can easily be trained to know which processes are dangerous and which they are not allowed to do by themselves. Within any such necessary limits there is much machinery, even fast moving, cutting machinery, which they can use.

In all types of work it is essential to demand a very high standard of general quality and finish and to require quality rather than quantity.

The ability of the instructors to sort out a process into its stages and to make simple production jigs is necessary to a good centre. All the instructors should be first of all craftsmen at their own trades. It is usually then possible to teach them any other crafts they may require, e.g., general handicrafts, and to give them sufficient knowledge of subnormality, its nature and effects, to suffice them.

We have found that within a local authority there is usually sufficient demand for goods of various kinds to be able to concentrate most of the production on this. The variety of goods and work required also gives a wide choice of activities for a centre.

In our woodwork section we have made furniture, ranging from wardrobes for the Children's Department, through wardrobes and beds for a hostel for adult female subnormals, bedside lockers for Welfare Services old people's homes, through a wide range to toys and children's furniture for day nurseries. In this department it is possible to teach some of the boys quick intricate work, including even the shapening and setting of blades for planes. In woodwork, too, there is much sandpapering and smoothing to be done which can be carried out even by very severely subnormal people. Some boys, using a jig, cut out with a bandsaw (rather more protected than the law requires) all the bases used in our basketry department, and others bore out the holes required for the canes, using a jig and electric drill. We are at present fulfilling a contract for the supply of these basket bases to the Blind Welfare Department. Stool upholstery and furniture repairs are also done.

In shoe repairing we have several contracts, including all boots and shoes from the Old Folks' Homes and Part III Accommodation of the Welfare Department, some of those from the Children's Department and Education's Residential Special Schools, and all the shoes from the Fire Brigade. These latter must have stitched sole repairs. The boys can do a very wide range of this work, and several have been taught a high degree of efficiency in hand-stitching soles. Several can use the treadle patching machine and most of the processes on the finishing machine. Some of the severely handicapped boys can do the necessary stripping off of old soles and heels. Others can do the whole job, including building up of worn parts with only a minimum of guidance.

In the production line in the basketry department we are grateful to a local tile manufacturing firm, who give us many coloured and printed tiles which we incorporate into teapot stands. One of our best selling lines here is that of picnic and shopping baskets woven in the colours of one of our local football teams. Our subnormal chargehand in this section (who gets free admission to the ground of this team) started these himself and sells a very large number of them on his own initiative and also brings in many orders for these and others.

In the leatherwork department we cover the usual wide range of goods and make all the leather bags used by our health visitors and school nurses, and many of the brief cases used by the Corporation. Work here includes both thonging and hand and machine stitching. Using templates for marking out the leather, some of the boys can do practically all the processes themselves.

In the rugmaking section training begins with simple instruction in knotting the wool and in woolcutting to the correct sizes and proceeds through single colour rugs; coloured rugs with the colours marked on the rug canvas; coloured charts to charts of complicated rugs using symbols for design and colour. This latter requires quite a high degree of skill and concentration. A rug was recently completed which incorporated in colour the City Crest, and it is now in use in the Lord Mayor's parlour. Sorting wools into colours provides an occupation for severe subnormals.

These are a few of the current production lines. The selection of work depends on the local market and on many factors such as seasonal variation. Every effort is made by experiment to create new lines and to develop new skills amongst the trainees.

In contract work we have recently obtained work from the Post Office authorities dismantling old telephone boxes and exchanges, and the salvaging of required parts for return. This involves much manual work and develops dexterity in the use of spanners and screwdrivers. Many of the actions are repetitive, and even severe subnormals can be trained to a quite high degree of skill with these tools. It is useful industrial training, and can be used to develop skills needed in constructive work. In this contract there is much wood remaining which can be re-used with advantage, and some of the cabinets from exchanges can be made into excellent bedside lockers, small tables and cupboards. Wood which is no use for this can be chopped down into firewood which can be bundled or barked and sold.

There are also a number of simple processes in engineering which are easily carried out in such a centre, e.g., cleaning, dismantling, assembling, packing or fettling castings, chain link and wire fence making, and metal work such as plant pot holders, wall brackets, light fittings, etc. Concrete blocks, paving and walling bricks are much used by local authorities, and are useful additions to the activities of a training centre.

There is no limit to the variety of tasks which can be undertaken, save that of the ingenuity of those in charge and their ability to obtain contracts or sell work done.

For the adult females many of these tasks can also be carried out, depending on the development of skills likely to be of use in the local labour market. We have recently made a very valued link with a world-famous local pottery, who have provided us with a turntable and cutter used in cutting out transfers for use on pottery, together with a supply of transfers for practice. They promise to employ any girls whom we train to a sufficient degree of skill, and already two girls have been trained and placed in this work. There is a wide-open field for co-operation with local industries in this and similar ways.

Embroidery has been developed to a very high degree of skill and perfection

in finish, and the standards obtainable even from medium grades are at least equal to that of highly trained normal people. Some girls reach a high degree of skill in poker work of intricate design, and in beadwork using fine small beads to a highly developed pattern. There are a number of girls who can produce children's frocks beautifully smocked, doing the whole process entirely on their own except for the fitting in of the shoulders, where they have to be assisted by an instructor.

Two girls can operate both a single bed and a new modern double-bedded knitting machine to produce knitwear. Tapestries are made by the girls and then used in making folding combined fire screen-coffee tables.

Using domestic type equipment, the girls in turn do all the laundrywork for the centre, running to several hundred items per week both for washing and ironing.

At the cookery class they are taught to make cakes, sponges and so on, and to prepare and cook mid-day meals. Each group of eight girls prepares and cooks twenty-five full three-course mid-day meals per day, reaching a good standard at all levels. They are taught good, useful recipes which they can use at home. This training in cookery also assists in their general education, in arithmetic and in money values, for they are taught costs as far as practicable.

Incidentally, two boys daily help in vegetable preparation, and once a week a full team of boys takes over from the girls and prepares these mid-day meals. They are very pleased about this and very jealous that their standard shall be as high as that of the girls! They have become very competent in cookery.

General training in housework and care of children is also useful for the girls.

Where training is being undertaken with a view to placement in industry, it is necessary to develop for a time basic general skills by some of the processes outlined above and to proceed along a planned training programme designed for the individual, keeping in mind the job in which he is to be placed or the type of industry in which he will be most likely placed. In this way the development of their skills can be purposeful and adequate financial rewards more easily assessed and paid.

The assessment of reasonable pay is not usually easy, but an attempt should be made to assess the value of the job as a whole according to the rate in normal employment and the rate which is being paid to the centre for it. It should be borne in mind that in most industries the trade unions have agreed to a lower rate for the work of mentally handicapped people producing less than normal. The rate should depend very largely on the productive capacity of the individual. Where a basic wage is being paid in addition to an hourly rate for a job or a piece rate or production bonus, it should be possible to vary the basic wage, depending on the general skill of and responsibility given to the worker as well as any other variations.

The amount of money paid to the trainee should have regard to the fact that the National Assistance Board allow them to earn only up to £1 per week without reduction of assistance. They should receive their earnings up to the proper level of their output and allow the National Assistance Board to make any necessary adjustments.

The Supervisor and the Mental Welfare Officers are well aware of the possibilities in the employment field, and work well with local employers, Disablement Resettlement Officers and Youth Employment Officers and parents to place these handicapped people in the best sphere according to their abilities.

In the non-productive activities of the centre, games, physical education and assistance in reading and writing all have their place. Difficulties in the three R's have a definite and often direct bearing on vocational successes and sometimes on general behaviour. Recognition of social and danger words, simple money operations and the acquisition of social skills amply repay the time spent on them.

It should always be remembered that, whilst a "work atmosphere" is essential in an adult centre, the measure of success is not the degree of productivity or the number of trainees placed in outside employment. The production of an atmosphere which allows each trainee to work at his own individual best at processes he can understand, appreciate, take an interest in and, if possible, an end product he can see and be proud of, together with a general overriding atmosphere of happiness, is the hallmark of success.