

# THE TRAINING CENTRE

## IV. CO-ORDINATING SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL TRAINING IN AN ADULT TRAINING CENTRE \*

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### VISION AND CONCEPT

It was one of old who said "Where there is no vision the people perish." Is it not equally true to say that it is vitally necessary in this exciting era to have vision and a clear concept of our aims and purposes in the training of the Mentally Handicapped? We need to possess drive, imagination and unlimited enthusiasm if the Centre is to fulfil the purpose for which it was built.

The Centre should not merely be a place of employment, but should meet the needs of every trainee. This can only be done by careful investigation, requiring an accurate diagnosis, and a thorough study of the trainee. There are emotional, vocational and social needs to be considered, and these can only be assessed over a period of time.

Trainees must be made aware that they are wanted, and they should be given that sense of belonging which will help them to achieve accomplishments which were not suspected in the past.

To have a name on a chart, or be given a number on a clocking-in board may have its own particular value as an aspect of training, but nevertheless the trainees must be regarded as individual personalities, each having different needs, and our facilities and methods must be adjusted in order to meet these needs.

### DIFFERING NEEDS

In attempting to meet these needs one must face facts, explore the many causes, and endeavour to find the answer.

Many trainees transferred from Junior Training Centres have already been given instruction in the basic skills. Those who have been uprooted from a sheltered and over protected environment have never really mixed socially. Others have failed to hold down jobs because of some emotional or social instability.

There is also the problem of the older trainee, whose parents are ageing and who is unlikely to secure permanent employment for various reasons, but has lived with reasonable success within the community for many years.

There is the over sensitive and the troublesome trainee, and also the young man whose adverse home circumstances have not permitted him to develop a sense of cleanliness and tidiness.

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\* The titles of the preceding three articles by workers in Training Centres were:

- I Has Training changed in the past 40 years? (I. M. Cooper) June, 1965.
- II Purpose-Built Training Centres (B. Schiphorst) December, 1965.
- III Education or Training (C. Tilstone) June, 1966.

In order to provide for these differing needs, it is important to recognise the most urgent; these must be investigated and understood if the right foundation for training is to be found.

The problem is extremely complex, and the programme must be arranged to help trainees overcome many of their limitations; e.g. the female trainee who is capable of using cosmetics, yet fails in matters concerning personal hygiene; another who is able to cook a simple meal but requires constant reminders that the utensils used in the process require cleaning.

## **ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT**

It is important to operate a scheme that is not over simplified to the extent that it becomes ineffective, or so elaborate that it creates confusion to both trainees and staff. It is necessary to co-ordinate every department so that the best possible results can be achieved.

The following account reports the organisational measures taken at the Moreton Training Centre to care for a trainee's social needs in an industrial setting.

### **(a) ASSESSMENT AT ADMISSION**

The first day at an adult training centre can be one of fear, excitement or anticipation, largely dependent upon the environment from which the trainee has come. A senior officer has been given the responsibility of ensuring that the trainee feels at ease and free from tension.

After a conducted tour of the centre, the trainee is given a temporary placement according to the results of the first assessment, the details of which are recorded in a special dossier for new admissions.

Special tests of abilities and dexterity are continued for a period of 4 weeks to assess any improvement as a result of training at the centre. At the conclusion of this transitional period, trainees are placed as follows:—

- A. into various social training units according to their needs.
- B. into work sections which are coded for pay awards. These are for trainees who are likely to remain in sheltered employment.
- C. if the new entrant shows promise in various skills both socially and industrially, he is placed in the pre-employment unit for intensive training, regardless of his age, background or educational attainment. This unit prepares for employment in open industry.

The purpose of this early investigation is to ascertain the needs, abilities and temperament of trainees, so that vocational guidance and direction can be given to the best advantage.

### **(b) SOCIAL TRAINING**

A part of the main hall is used for training purposes, and specially designed screens and equipment have been constructed to this end.

There are a number of Units, some of which are used as classrooms and some for demonstration lessons.

The classrooms are used for speech training; emergency 3 R/s, e.g. money values, sight reading, writing own name and address, etc.

Demonstration Units (male and female) include two rooms specially equipped for giving instruction in hygiene and other forms of self-help. The Unit for domestic training has been designed in the form of a completely self-contained furnished flat, with a large cookery section.

Within the field of Social Training the units give instruction in a wide range of subjects, incorporating all social needs. Detailed schedules of instruction have been prepared for the guidance of staff.

Instruction is three-fold: theory, practical demonstration, and real life situations. Schedules have been prepared for each of these, designed in 4 grades, A. to D., to enable successful trainees to progress from one grade to the next, e.g. within the cookery class, Grade "D" would involve the recognition of hot and cold water taps, the lighting of stoves, etc. After this level has been achieved, the trainee passes through various stages to the final grade, which may involve the preparation of a snack. Included as part of the training programme is instruction in the use of Telephone kiosk, Post Office, Supermarket, Refreshment Bar, Beauty Salon for females and Tape Recording Unit.

Five members of staff are fully engaged throughout each day in Social Training; classes last for periods of 20 minutes to one hour, and embrace both individual and collective teaching.

As the needs of individual trainees differ, so does the type of training recommended, and a plan has been designed to meet these needs, e.g., 3 R work is not given to every trainee, but only to those who are likely to benefit from such instruction.

In many cases, improving speech, caring for one's self, and the ability to prepare a snack are considered more important attributes than educational attainment. The ability to read long words, and to add up sums of money, does not in itself make for complete success in life. One needs to remember that it is of the greatest importance to help the trainee play his or her part in the life of the community. Encouraging the trainees to make the most of their limited abilities is invaluable service rendered by the Centre.

To do this, it is necessary for the Centre to be a place of complete fulfilment for the trainees, where confidence replaces fear, and hope outweighs failure.

It should be pointed out that instruction overlaps in certain classes, but, by repetition and examination, there is much to be gained from this three-fold system.

An appointment office is centrally situated within the work area, where the trainees collect appointment cards for the various classes. The card has the age, name, day and time of class and has space for written comments. The comments must be relevant and convey the desired meaning to the trainee; where the trainee cannot appreciate written comments, marks are used to convey meaning.

Members of the staff keep documentary evidence of the progress of each trainee, the information being entered in dossiers specially designed for the purpose. The efforts of the trainee must be properly evaluated and information should not be vague; fairness and accuracy are most essential.

Trainees who have succeeded in the first two phases of instruction are then placed in real life situations outside the centre, under the guidance of a senior officer. The exercises include many social skills, e.g. Road sense, number of bus and route to take, choice of goods to be purchased, use of money, and, possibly, making a telephone call. Trainees are divided into smaller groups for these exercises, each having an opportunity to take part.

**(c) INDUSTRIAL TRAINING**

There are several departments for this type of training, e.g.

Use of wood-cutting and other tools.

Wood-working machinery.

Sealing machines.

Sewing machines.

Welding machines.

Assembling and dismantling work.

Packaging and stacking of articles.

Instruction in safety-first measures.

Industrial craft work, including the manufacture of stool frames, a variety of vanity stools, mops, mats and sewing, is conducted on a commercial basis.

Schedules of Instruction are used as in the case of social training, and record is kept of the trainees' progress.

**(d) PRE-EMPLOYMENT UNIT**

This unit, operating on an entirely different plan and on factory lines, has its own entrance. Selection of trainees for this unit is based on such factors as:—

- A. Work performance.
- B. Self-reliance.
- C. Work attitudes.
- D. Sociability.
- E. Working without supervision and carrying out tasks of special responsibility.

Incentives, target setting, and the use of clocking-in-and-out boards, and work record cards are all part of the training. A variety of work is carried out by both sexes, including machine work, manufacturing articles, horticulture, packaging and repetitive work.

Trainees are encouraged to improve their knowledge of the social skills including 3 R. work. One half day per week is allocated for such training, when the unit is divided into smaller groups for this purpose.

Rates of pay differ according to the task, and are dependent upon results.

Visits to local factories are now being arranged. Lunches are served in Cafeteria style to this particular group of trainees.

*Trainees in this unit are made to feel that they are being trained for real jobs.*

**(e) OTHER CLASSES**

Leisure and creative art classes are held on a sessional basis, and are of therapeutic value. They include cane work, water colour painting and drawing, embroidery, pottery, etc.

Sometimes these classes provide a useful remedy for the trainee who appears somewhat disturbed, and who cannot settle down to normal routine activity.

## **SCHEME OF INTER-CHANGE**

To attend social classes, trainees are relieved from the work sections in a manner which does not disrupt assembly lines. "Relief Trainees" act as replacements for those attending social classes. A specially designed "Marker Board" has been devised, enabling staff to see at a glance who is absent or undergoing special training.

Over 100 classes are held each week to advance the social development of the trainees, and many of them are able to attend classes regularly. This is extremely important in maintaining a consistent pattern of training. Members of staff are also inter-changeable in the social and industrial training programme. This not only affords them a wider interest in the activity of the Centre, but also opportunities of becoming acquainted with a larger proportion of the trainees which proves a great asset in staff discussions.

There are 12 work sections in operation, and, for simplicity of management, each section consists of male and female trainees of differing abilities.

## **COMMUNITY LIFE OF THE CENTRE**

### **The Refreshment Bar**

From 9 a.m. each morning the refreshment bar is operated by the trainees, and purchases are paid for. Soft drinks, tea and confectionery, comic papers and books are available, and a cash register is used.

Trainees who have proved capable of understanding coinage are permitted to handle the money.

At lunch time, male trainees act as stewards, and meals are served in restaurant style to trainees not in the pre-employment unit.

### **Current Affairs**

Following the "Get together" at the refreshment bar, there is a period set aside for informative talks. Trainees are divided into groups according to their degree of intelligence, so that everyone is able to appreciate the advice and counsel offered.

For approximately ten minutes, talks are given on current events from radio, T.V. and newspapers. The trade, customs and other interesting features of the countries of the world are described, and illustrated by maps and objects of interest.

Guidance is given on morals, courtesy and politeness, and what is expected of a good citizen. As a part of their training, attempts are made to develop in the trainee a sense of gratitude, and acceptance of discipline and the occasional disappointment.

Relating some incident or experience in which a member of staff has been concerned, often gives rise to laughter, or results in a moment of serious thought. Taking part in these sessions is of more value than the written word can convey. Many kinds of music are used.

The prime purpose of beginning the day in such a manner is to bring colour and interest into the life of the trainee, and to foster a spirit of goodwill and harmony in which everyone, including cooks, cleaners, trainees and teaching staff may live together for a period of 7 hours a day. A sense of involvement is created, to make everyone feel he plays a part in the development of the trainees.

### **Extensions of the Social Training Programme**

A Youth Club is held one evening per week, attended by approximately 70 trainees, the members having been enrolled by the Medical Officer of Health in a

dignified manner. A scroll, which now hangs in the Hall at the Centre, was signed by each member in his own inimitable way.

A planned programme governs the club activities, and includes films, Discussion Groups, Country Dancing, under professional instruction, and instruction in team games, quizzes etc. A group of young people aged 16 to 20 years and referred to as Club "Associates," assist on Club nights. They come from High Schools, offices, trades of many kinds, and they render invaluable assistance. There has been a marked improvement in the response from the trainees, for the associates have succeeded in interesting them in whatever is taking place at the club, and previous fears and shyness are now disappearing rapidly.

A Pantomime was carried through successfully in January 1966 and over 800 people attended on three evenings. 40 trainees took part, both on stage and as assistants in the production.

A Gala Day has added great interest and has helped in broadening the outlook of many of the trainees. The object was to assist the young people in the development of self-discipline and self-confidence, and help them to find greater satisfaction and enjoyment in living a fuller life.

### **INCENTIVES AND RELATED PAY AWARDS**

The large proportion of trainees attending the centre are unlikely to enter local industry, and many of them would appreciate the rattle of 12 pennies rather than the single half crown in a wage packet because of lack of understanding in money values. *There is a temptation to standardise pay awards, but would this be a wise or a retrograde step?* Reward has always acted as a stimulus to learning, and in such cases, to reward keenness, willingness and effort is perhaps the first consideration. More difficult tasks can be recognised by slightly more pay. The contents of the pay packet can be made up in pence or silver, whichever causes the greater satisfaction. Praise from members of the staff for worthwhile efforts have a greater effect on many of the trainees than the pay award itself.

Wall charts showing personal and collective progress add to the excitement, and create a spirit of competition.

### **IMPORTANT FACTORS OF TRAINING**

There are several aspects which have a great influence on the success of a Training Scheme.

1. Social relationships. The trainee who is unsettled because of dislike for the person working next to him is unlikely to learn or become efficient at his work.
2. Personal welfare and happiness. Some trainees have home anxieties, temporary discomfort, fear of machinery or a dislike of the job, and these may hinder them from achieving what might have been a success.
3. Learning by imitation and repetition. It is important that the arrangement of teaching aids, jigs, etc., is such that it is easy for the trainee to imitate and repeat the exercise, which assists in increasing confidence.
4. The danger of too many teaching aids. Confidence gained by the trainee in any particular task is an indication that the aids necessary in the initial steps may be removed.

Personal skill and effort must be encouraged wherever possible. Speed and accuracy are often secondary to the ability to do a task unaided, and the exercise of initiative. For trainees who do not wish to learn, it is important that one should be constantly on the look-out for ways of arousing curiosity as a means of motivation so that learning can begin.

It is important that staff are able to make these observations, and have the tact, patience and ability to deal with such problems.

### **CASE CONFERENCES AND STAFF MEETINGS**

Two periods are set aside each week, when staff, under the guidance of senior officers for social training and industrial undertakings, meet to discuss the problems of trainees, and the manner in which specific problems can be met with at the Centre. These meetings usually lead to frank, lively, and constructive discussion at which staff are free to express their views and put forward new ideas and suggestions.

Reviews for transfer of trainees in the workshop areas take place at the end of each term.

Staff meetings are conducted monthly to consider new projects, staff changes and the general administration of the Centre.

A graph has been designed to collate information relating to the trainees' progress at the centre from the day of admission up to the present time. The graph will indicate at once the failures, successes or stalemate of each trainee.

### **LIAISON WITH PARENTS**

A few weeks ago, approximately 200 parents and relatives attended a meeting at the centre. The programme was arranged so that the Chief Training Officer could speak to parents, discuss future plans for the centre, and ask for their continued support. This was followed by a tour of observation of the centre, and proved to be an interesting and rewarding occasion for all.

A questionnaire had previously been sent to every parent requesting information on any particular problem on which it was thought help could be given.

Parents do not dictate to the staff on their work, but are free to visit them by appointment and express their hopes and fears concerning their sons and daughters. Good relations are of great importance between parents and staff.

### **IN CONCLUSION**

There are, as yet, many staff in training centres who are untrained by Training Council standards, awaiting the opportunity to attend full-time courses. In the meantime it is only fair to say that the laymen and laywomen who serve in our centres, and equip themselves by reading, attending conferences, and lectures, do a remarkably fine job.

Everyone engaged in the work of training the Mentally Handicapped requires a personality that can win the heart and gain the confidence of the trainees. To do this one must have an inner strength and conviction. This is no ordinary job; it is a task demanding great courage, and the ability to adapt oneself to constant change brought about by recent discoveries. There is a risk, unless we are sustained by a strong sense of vocation, of not giving of our best.