

which was an average cost of 50.44 pence compared with an average cost in 1953 of 48.82 pence.

Local Health Authority Services.

Domiciliary Midwifery.

At the end of 1954 there were 7,570 midwives employed in the domiciliary midwifery service, of whom 6,646 were employed directly by local authorities. The proportion (38 per cent.) of home confinements under the National Health Service remained about the same as in 1953.

Maternity and Child Welfare.

There was a slight fall during 1954 in the number of women attending ante-natal clinics and in the number of new cases, but the birth rate also fell. There was very little difference between 1953 and 1954 in the number of children up to two years of age attending clinics.

In spite of a continued shortage of dental staff in many areas, the number of sessions devoted to expectant and nursing mothers and to pre-school children again increased, from 30,645 at 1,016 clinics in 1953 to 33,857 at 1,081 clinics last year.

Day Nurseries.

In 1954, 96 day nurseries were closed, but attendances fell only slightly. "It is reasonable to deduce that the nurseries closed were those for which there was least demand and which were, therefore, least economical to run." The estimated cost of providing day nurseries, however, rose slightly in 1953-54 to £2 13s. per week per nursery place. This is 1s. more than in the previous 12 months.

Home Nursing.

The numbers of nurses employed in the home nursing service at the end of the year was 9,642, of whom 278 were student district nurses and 5,233 were employed part-time. The total showed an increase of 121 over 1953. Although there was a slight decrease in the number of patients concerned, the demand continued to increase, in that 23,572,975 visits were paid to 1,148,936 patients, compared with 22,411,859 visits to 1,176,549 patients in 1953. About half the work consisted of nursing the aged and chronic sick.

Home Helps.

"During 1954 the domestic help service continued to expand, mainly by the recruitment of part-time staff, who now form 91 per cent. of the total number of helps employed." This total at the end of the year was 2,955 whole-time and 30,353 part-time. The number of cases attended rose during the year from 199,033 to 215,764, of which 32,371 were maternity and 6,927 tuberculosis cases. "The needs of the aged and chronic sick being nursed at home continued to make a heavy demand on the home help service," help being provided in 134,571 cases.

Health Visitors.

The total number of health and tuberculosis visitors in 1954 was 6,709, which was the equivalent of 4,392 whole-time staff. The number of visits by general duty health visitors was 11,600,000. The Report comments that there seems to be "an increasing awareness of the varying spheres in which health visiting staff can be used with advantage."

B.C.G. Vaccination.

Up to the end of the year 88 local authorities had submitted schemes for B.C.G. vaccination of schoolchildren aged 13-14. By the end of the year 249,500 schoolchildren and known contacts with tuberculosis had been vaccinated.

Mental Defectives.

At the end of 1954 there were more mental defectives under the care of local authorities—76,987 compared with 75,810 at the start of the year. Over 7,000 were on waiting lists for admission to hospitals. Eleven more occupational centres were opened, bringing the total to 255, including nine run by private bodies.

Problem Families.

During 1954 the Minister informed local health authorities of his concern at the bad effects on the health, particularly the mental health, of children which follows the break-up of a family, and they were asked to use their services with a view to doing everything possible to keep families together. Examples are given of the use of health visitors, home-helps, and special services which are being used in this direction by some local authorities.

Vaccination and Immunisation.

During 1954 the number of children immunised against diphtheria was 585,549, compared with 521,887 in 1953; 239,569 babies under the age of one year were immunised, against 199,378. There is a growing belief, comments the Report, that diphtheria is a thing of the past. "To counter this dangerous complacency it cannot be repeated too often that the safeguard against a return of diphtheria epidemics is the maintenance of a high level of immunisation."

Persons primarily vaccinated against smallpox—numbered 304,560, compared with 474,366 in the previous year.

At the end of the year approval had been given for 114 authorities' arrangements for immunisation against whooping cough.

Ambulance Services.

In the year ended March, 1954, 13,633,000 patients were carried by the ambulance services. This is over a million more than in the previous 12 months. The cost per patient fell from 15s. 4d. to 14s. 7d.

Welfare.

In 1954, 99 further small homes for the elderly and infirm "in need of care and attention" were opened by local authorities, bringing the total since the war to 798, with accommodation for 23,000 people. Voluntary organisations were also active in providing new old people's homes. Tables show that residential accommodation was at the end of the year being provided for 69,303 people.

The total number of blind persons on the registers of local authorities was 93,622, the highest figure recorded.

Mental Hospitals in 1954.

Continuing Shortage of Staff.

THE NUMBER OF PATIENTS in mental hospitals increased during 1954 by 1,352, compared with an average increase during the past five years of 1,223. At the end of 1954 the total number of patients under treatment for mental illness was 152,144 of whom 140,487 were in mental hospitals. These figures are given in the Annual Report for 1954 of the Board of Control, published as a White Paper.*

Mental hospitals provide accommodation for 123,725 patients, or 568 more than at the end of 1953. For various reasons 2,170 beds were not in use, so that hospitals were overcrowded to the extent of 18,932 patients.

Shortage of staff was the reason for 765 beds not being in use. This is a reduction of 334 compared with the previous year, "but the number out of use would be far greater were it not for the fact that a large number of the wards which are in use are carrying on with a much smaller nursing complement than they should have."

At the end of the year the number of trained nurses was 7,486 full-time and 73 part-time men, and 3,732 full-time and 1,538 part-time women. Compared with 1953, this is a reduction of 126 full-time and an increase of 18 part-time trained male nurses and increases of 13 full-time and 97 part-time female nurses.

Nursing Assistants continued to provide welcome relief, and there was some increase in their numbers. There was, however, a further decline, though not such a large one as in

*Annual Report of the Board of Control to the Lord Chancellor, for the year 1954, H.M.S.O. price 6d.

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