

The Midwife.

SCHEME FOR THE WORKING OF MATERNITY CENTRES AND CHILD WELFARE CENTRES.

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(Abridged.)

The question of Maternity and Child Welfare is a subject which must be considered as a National necessity, the alarming wastage of ante-natal and infant life is likely in the future to be a national calamity, much more so than the loss of life during the present war. It is a well-known fact that the yearly wastage of pre-natal, natal, and post-natal life is of much larger proportion than any we are likely to lose in the war. This wastage must be remedied by some means or other in whichever way is most suited to the various localities, although it would be of great advantage to the community that uniformity in the administration should be ensured, and the larger and more important the authorities dealing with it, the more will the procedure tend to uniformity.

No woman pregnant, or infant, should be lost sight of, and if a scheme which will embrace all the agencies at work is adopted, it will greatly facilitate its being carried out satisfactorily.

The wastage of pre-natal life is greatly due to the home conditions of the working mother, venereal disease, intemperance, and lack in many cases of suitable food. Steps in all directions are being taken to improve these conditions; there is still a great deal more to be done. The mother is the last person to be considered in a working man's home. She has to wash, cook, and sew for the whole family, and seldom takes a holiday or rest. The industrial worker does not have such a constant strain on her as the home worker, who has continual petty worries, the care of children all day long, as well as her household work, which involves great physical exertion, which goes on without a break through the pre-natal time. This does not seem to affect the average woman, the offspring are strong and vigorous, but the weakly woman suffers from pre-natal abnormal conditions, and therefore needs constant supervision and attention during that time.

Ante-natal wastage, according to statistics given, is much more alarming than post-natal. Therefore, it seems that the pregnant woman needs more legislating for than hitherto has been the case, and this is most difficult to arrange. So many conditions are answerable for ante-natal wastage—physical, material, and social—all take their part in it. Natal and post-

natal cases are easier, as it is obvious, given good home conditions, natal care and post-natal supervision, the average child should survive, being born with few exceptions quite healthy.

The working scheme for maternity and child welfare should be worked in the following way:—The Local Supervising Authority should have supreme control, working through Counties, Boroughs, and District Councils. The Public Health Department of these bodies should form a Sub-Committee to deal with Maternity and Child Welfare in their area, to include representatives from the local Medical Association, Maternity and General Hospitals, Midwives' Association, District Nursing Association, School for Mothers, including Infant Consultations, Day Nursery, Poor Law Guardians, and other Relief Agencies in the County, Boroughs, or Districts. The Medical Officer of Health to be ex-officio on all Committees.

OBJECTS OF THE SCHEME.

The improvement of health conditions of the mothers and young children of the United Kingdom.

METHODS.

1. Visiting mothers and advising them generally on the rearing of infants and young children, the provision of suitable food and clothing, cooking, serving, &c.
2. Obtaining proper food and medical advice for those whose circumstances render such help necessary; co-operating for this purpose with local Charities and Societies.
3. Utilising the services of visitors and trained workers, paid or voluntary, in giving practical instruction and advice in matters of hygiene to the people in their homes.
4. Visiting expectant mothers and encouraging them to lay by weekly sums towards the expenses of their confinement and forming a provident club for that purpose.
5. Arranging classes for the instruction on health and domestic subjects for mothers and young women.
6. To arrange for lectures and examinations in Infant Welfare, and Social Subjects for voluntary workers.
7. The preparation and circulation of leaflets, cards, and pamphlets on subjects relating to the health of mothers and children.
8. Ante-Natal Clinics and Infant Consultations.
9. Arrange for the co-operation of all bodies working for the health of the nation.
10. Such other methods as may from time to time appear advisable.

In Counties and Boroughs where the Notification of Births Act has been adopted it is easy to keep in touch with all the infants born, but difficulties arise in connection with the expectant mother.

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