

## THE TRAINING OF HEALTH VISITORS UNDER THE SCOTTISH BOARD OF HEALTH.

A Memorandum has been issued by the Scottish Board of Health relating to the training of Health Visitors, which is both important and interesting to trained nurses.

### INTRODUCTORY.

The Board state in the first place that "the duties of Health Visitors, widening continually since the first Health Visitor was appointed, have never been closely defined; and hitherto the Board have hesitated to lay down any precise requirements in regard to their recruitment and qualifications, since that would have involved a premature definition of the limits of their sphere of employment. The lines of development of the employment have now become fairly clear, and the time seems to have come for placing the training of Health Visitors on an organised basis. The question has been placed before the Consultative Councils on Medical and Allied Services, and on Local Health Administration and General Health Questions. The Board are indebted to these Councils for their careful consideration of the matter, and the main provisions of the conditions now laid down are based on their Reports."

### CONDITIONS.

The conditions provide for two broad types of the course, leading to the Probation Certificate, a full course, and a modified course for persons with special knowledge and experience.

"There has hitherto been no special training available, and recruitment has been mainly from among trained nurses, whose training and outlook were necessarily concerned with the treatment of disease. The specialised instruction now proposed will ensure that due weight is given to the preventive aspects of the service."

For the full course it is suggested that "(a) in normal circumstances the *specialised instruction* to which an average duration of 1½ years has been assigned, should follow on the students' Intermediary or Secondary School Course. In the later years of the school career, or at continuation or other classes, students may already have obtained some acquaintance with certain branches of instruction. The assessment of the value of this knowledge may be difficult, but it is very desirable that students should not be required to waste time on subjects with which they are already familiar. That is a matter that will require very careful consideration by the Training Institution Authorities in first instance."

"(b) *Hospital or other work.*"—The Board state that "while no course of training for Health Visitors would be satisfactory, if it did not provide for a sufficient knowledge of nursing duties, they desire to emphasise the view that a full course of training in a single type of hospital is not a sufficient equipment for a Health Visitor unless it can be made

sufficiently comprehensive to cover the particular branches of work set forth in the Schedule. The arrangement of hospital work will no doubt provide problems in hospital administration but the Board are confident that hospital authorities will endeavour to meet the needs of student nurses who propose to train for health visiting."

"There is no single body at present in a position to control effectively the whole of a student's Course. A Training Institution should itself provide training in branches for which it has special facilities, but it should also take advantage of any facilities that can be made available by hospitals, Universities, Education Authorities, Central Institution, Schools for professional training or other bodies."

The Board consider that "temperament is not less important than training. If a Health Visitor's service is to yield the best results she must be a woman of tact, patience and good sense, and if she lacks these qualities she may bring the whole service into disrepute. A period of two years' probation after the close of training, together with an age limit of 25 before final certification, should go far to eliminate the chance of ultimate professional failure."

"As it is clearly essential that all Health Visitors' Probation Certificates to be issued by the Training Institutions should be of equal value, it will be necessary to secure that the examinations held by the several training Institutions are of a uniform standard, and the Board consider that it may be found desirable to have a single joint Examining Body."

### HEALTH VISITOR'S CERTIFICATE.

"The Board will issue the full Health Visitor's Certificate, and will keep a Register of persons holding this Certificate and of persons holding the Health Visitor's Probation Certificate. The Register will record particulars of training and of subsequent employment, and the Board, in approving Training Institutions for the purposes of the Conditions will require that they furnish necessary particulars in respect of every person to whom they issue a Health Visitor's Probation Certificate.

### "EXISTING" HEALTH VISITORS.

The Conditions provide for the certification of all whole-time Health Visitors who were appointed before the Conditions were issued and whose service is approved. After a date to be fixed by the Board they may withhold their sanction to the appointment by a Public Health Local Authority of any person as a whole-time Health Visitor who does not hold the Health Visitor's Certificate and of any person as a whole-time Assistant Health Visitor who does not hold the Health Visitor's "Probation Certificate."

The qualifications of part-time Health Visitors are at present left undefined and will not be insisted on before March 31st, 1924.

### DEFINITION.

In regard to the definition of the term Health Visitor it is important to notice that it applies

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