

MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE.

TRAINING OF HEALTH VISITORS.

The Ministry of Health has issued a Memorandum modifying the requirements enforced in 1919 for the Training of Health Visitors. We print below the most important paragraphs:—

1. In his circular of July 14th, 1919 (Circular 4, M.C.W. 10), with reference to the training of Health Visitors, the Minister drew the attention of local authorities to the Board of Education (Health Visitors' Training) Regulations, 1919, which make provision (a) for a course of two years for candidates without previous training, and (b) for a course of one year in the case of fully trained nurses, or women with experience in health visiting, or of those possessing a University Degree or its academical equivalent—assuming in each case that the individual possesses sufficient general knowledge or experience to profit by such a course.

2. The Board of Education, in consultation with the Ministry, have now modified the requirement in (b) above, and have announced (Circular 1267) that, in order to facilitate the training of nurses as Health Visitors they will be prepared to approve whole or part-time courses of less than one year's duration at recognised Institutions for trained nurses who have had a three years' course of general hospital training or a full course of training at a Children's Hospital. It has also been decided that these shortened courses shall be open to women who have been acting for three years as Health Visitors in the service of local authorities and who are willing to take a short refresher course.

4. A number of women have now obtained the certificate prescribed by the Regulations of the Board of Education, and some of these have obtained posts as Health Visitors. The supply of women with this certificate may not, however, be adequate yet to fill all the Health Visitors' posts that fall vacant, and in some cases local authorities may wish to combine with the office of Health Visitor another office for which further qualifications are desired. The Minister expects, however, that local authorities who have to fill a vacancy in the office of Health Visitor in the future will so frame their advertisements as to admit of applications being made by women with the certificate prescribed by the Board of Education, and will give preference to such women in filling vacancies, where further qualifications are not required.

5. For the present the Minister proposes to require, in cases outside London to which his sanction and the payment of grant is desired, that a woman appointed as a Health Visitor should have one of the following qualifications:—

- (i) The certificate prescribed by the Regulations of the Board of Education.
- (ii) Three years' training in a General Hospital, or full training in a Children's Hospital, together with at least one of the following qualifications:—

(a) the certificate of the Central Midwives Board;

(b) the certificate of a Sanitary Inspector;

(c) the certificate for Health Visitors of one of the bodies approved by the Local Government Board under the Health Visitors (London) Order, 1909, *i.e.*, the Royal Sanitary Institute, the Royal Institute of Public Health, the National Health Society, or the Battersea Polytechnic.

For the present the Minister will be prepared to dispense with the full qualifications referred to in (i) and (ii) in special cases in which evidence is submitted that a woman whom it is proposed to appoint as a Health Visitor has had previous experience of the duties under a local authority and has discharged them efficiently.

This paragraph will apply also in London and outside London to superintendents of Centres who are not Health Visitors where grant is desired in respect of their salaries.

6. The Health Visitors (London) Order, 1909, will continue in force and will govern appointments of Health Visitors in London until January 1st, 1923. The Minister proposes to rescind it from that date, when the approval given under the Order to the certificate of the bodies referred to in paragraph 5 (ii) (c) above will be withdrawn. Paragraph 5 of the memorandum will then apply to appointments of Health Visitors in London.

9. Many Health Visitors at present act as Assistant Inspectors of Midwives under the Medical Officer of Health or the Assistant Medical Officer of Health. The Minister of Health considers that the inspection of midwives should be carried out under the direct supervision of a medical practitioner, preferably a medical woman. In cases where a non-medical woman takes part in the inspection of midwives it is essential that she should not only possess the certificate of the Central Midwives Board, but should have had substantial experience as a practising midwife. She should also be a fully-trained nurse.

10. The visiting of expectant mothers before confinement and of infants during the first ten days after birth, is at present undertaken in some areas by Health Visitors. The Minister is of opinion that this work should be assigned to the midwife (where a midwife has been engaged by the mother) wherever this can be done consistently with the efficient discharge of the important duties involved.

12. Some Health Visitors who possess the requisite qualification have been appointed as Sanitary Inspectors or Assistant Sanitary Inspectors to discharge the duties of that office which are usually assigned to women. The Minister will be prepared to approve this arrangement where it is found convenient, but Health Visitors acting in this capacity should not be required to undertake the serving of notices and the conduct of prosecutions for sanitary defects discovered in the course of their visits as Health Visitors.

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