

The Midwife.

PLANNING THE HOME HEALTH SERVICES.

MINISTER'S GUIDANCE ON MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE

Mr. Aneurin Bevan, Minister of Health, has now given detailed guidance to Local Health Authorities to help them in planning the Home Health Services for which they will be responsible under the National Health Service Act.

These services include:—

The care of mothers and young children; health visiting; midwives' service; home nursing; prevention of illness and care and after-care of patients; and the provision of domestic help.

Making Full Use of Resources

Mr. Bevan's aim is to see that the best use is made of the resources which will be available on the appointed day—July 5th, 1948. The Local Health Authorities are accordingly told first to examine these resources and to see that they are organised to maximum advantage. Secondly, they are asked for a "development plan" showing how, as resources expand and opportunity arises, they will fill any gaps and bring their services to full efficiency.

The Minister stresses the importance of linking up the home health services with the family doctor service provided by the Executive Councils, and with the hospital and specialist services organised by the Regional Hospital Boards, so that all work together to provide a single comprehensive service.

Maternity and Child Welfare

Dealing with differences between the present maternity and child welfare services and those to be provided under the Act, the Minister points out (1) that every expectant mother or nursing mother and every child, like everyone else, will if they wish now have a family doctor; and (2) that the hospital services of the Regional Hospital Boards will include for them, as for the rest of the community, the services of a specialist where necessary.

Local professional committees will draw up lists of doctors with special experience of maternity work who are willing to attend confinements and, in case of need, to be called in by midwives. These doctors are described as "general practitioner obstetricians." "The duty of the family doctor," states Mr. Bevan, "when consulted by a woman who is pregnant, will be to see that she knows how to obtain the services of a midwife, and if he himself is not on the local approved list, to help the woman to choose a general practitioner obstetrician from it. The latter will give her the necessary ante-natal and post-natal care, and will be present, if he thinks it necessary, at the confinement."

It is expected that the general practitioner obstetricians, together with selected officers of the Local Health Authorities' maternity service, the midwives and a consultant obstetrician will form composite obstetrical teams in each area. "But," says Mr. Bevan, "although it is to be expected that more ante-natal and post-natal care will be given by general practitioner obstetricians than has been the case in the past, it does not follow that the provision now made directly by local authorities under these heads can be substantially reduced. In particular, there is a real need for the continuance of Local Health Authorities' ante-natal clinics, which provide the regular and systematic supervision of the pregnant woman that it is difficult both for the medical practitioner and the midwife to undertake without the help of the special facilities at such clinics."

A greater degree of specialisation in either maternity or

child welfare is urged for medical officers of the Local Health Authorities' maternity and child welfare service.

Dental Care

Recognising that there may be a bigger demand for dental treatment than the available dentists will be able to meet, the Minister points out that mothers and young children must be given priority. Local Health Authorities are asked to build up their arrangements so as to provide a dental examination for every expectant mother following her first attendance at the ante-natal clinic; the periodical examination of children, including those in day nurseries, up to the time they come under the School Dental Service; and treatment, especially conservative treatment, where necessary.

Painless Childbirth

Regarding painless childbirth, all Local Health Authorities are told to make special efforts to secure that all midwives are trained in the administration of gas and air analgesia as soon as possible. The necessary apparatus is now more readily obtainable and if midwives have cars or autocycles, the chief remaining obstacle to the use of analgesia in home confinements, it is pointed out, is the difficulty of sparing midwives from practice for training. The authorities are asked to try to find ways of overcoming this hindrance.

Health Visitors

The Health Visitor is to concern herself not only with mothers and young children but with the whole family. She will advise on the promotion of health as well as on precautions against the spreading of infection, working in the closest co-operation with the family doctor.

Prevention of Illness: Care and After-Care

Arrangements must be made for the care and after-care of the tuberculous and for preventing the spread of infection among their families or fellow-workers. Medical specialists, jointly appointed, will link diagnostic and curative work with preventive and after-care work.

Arrangements on similar lines may be made for those suffering from other illnesses. Patients being nursed at home will be able to borrow such sick-room equipment as water-beds, bed-rests, bed blocks, sandbags, commodes and crutches.

NO MIDWIFE WAS CALLED.

On Saturday, June 21st, at 4 p.m., there was a stir down by the pond in Kensington Gardens. A guard of honour was drawn up, as for royalty, and between the ranks of the admiring general public waddled, in great pride and dignity, a fat brown duck, followed by 14 cute little ducklings (not so dignified). Mother Duck headed straight for the water, followed by her babes, who squealed with delight at the first embrace of the cold waters. When all were safely on their watery home, my Lady Duck turned and almost bowed to the watching crowds. She looked, and no doubt felt, like a star on her most successful night.

"Three cheers for the Lady of the Lake," cried a deep bass voice, and there and then the proud mother received three hearty British cheers for the safe launching of her brood.

She sailed away to the middle of the waters, her little ones darting about her like Mayflies and thoroughly enjoying the sunny evening afloat. We have since tried to discover where the Duck laid her eggs and had her nest, but their whereabouts remain a military secret. Evidently no midwife was called in.

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