

HEALTH NEWS · COMMUNITY NEWS · COMMUNITY HEALTH **COMMUNITY HEALTH NEWS** · HEALTH NEWS · COMMUNITY NEWS · COMMUNITY HEALTH

Association of Community Health Councils for England and Wales

c/o The Nurses Home, Langton Close, Wren Street, London WC1X 0ND. Tel: (01) 833 4456.

No. 20. Jan/Feb. 1987

A BUSY TIME AHEAD?

Toby Harris, new Director of ACHCEW, writes:

"My first few weeks in post have been given over to reading my way into the job and establishing links around the country. I will be attending meetings of eight of the regional groupings of CHCs over the next few months and hope to arrange similar meetings with the remaining regions as soon as possible. I am very much looking forward to meeting Secretaries and Members of CHCs in this way, as I believe such personal contacts are vital in ensuring that I represent the interests of ACHCEW effectively.

"A number of major initiatives are also in hand. These include:

'Patients Charter' - This has been handed over to the Secretary of State for Social Services and we will shortly be asking to meet him to discuss it. Michael McNair-Wilson MP has tabled an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons supporting the Charter and ACHCEW is in the process of writing to all MPs urging them to sign the Motion. We will be press releasing this and circulating copies of the Charter to the press on Monday 16 February 1987. I hope that CHCs will be able to promote the Charter in their areas over the next few weeks as well.

'The Public and the NHS' - we will be seeking the formal views of the DHSS on this paper and will be asking to meet Edwina Currie MP to discuss it. Again we hope that CHCs will do what they can to promote its recommendations. A number of CHCs are using 'The Public and the NHS' as part of their induction package for new members and to focus their own discussions on future work. Further copies of 'The Public and the NHS' are available from the ACHCEW office (price £3.00 per copy with a discount of 10% on 30 copies and over).

Primary Care Review - ACHCEW has published its response to the DHSS consultation on Primary Care (as reported elsewhere in this Newsletter) and we will now be discussing our conclusions with other bodies in the health field. The Primary Care review presents a major opportunity to promote the needs of consumers of health services and we must not lose sight of this objective. Again local efforts by CHCs in responding to the DHSS consultation have been very important in this."

A.I.D.S.

ACHCEW has now formulated its submission to the House of Commons Social Services Committee. After looking at the response of Government and the various departments, local authorities, industry, voluntary organisations and the media, ACHCEW states that there must be a national programme for action, led by the Government. This must include a comprehensive public education programme co-ordinated by the DHSS, but also involving the DOE and DES; the provision of free condoms; the provision of free needles and syringes to all registered injecting drug addicts wherever they are on a "new for old" basis; that Government must make available the necessary resources for health and local authorities to tackle AIDS properly; that counselling must be developed as a central feature of any provision; that co-ordination of the information available is an urgent necessity (the reformed Health Education Council could possibly provide the basis for this) and that funding will also be needed for an expanded research programme aimed at finding an antidote to HIV.

As Health Authorities will be bearing the brunt of the problem, they must receive increased Government funding as a matter of urgency. The demand for testing for AIDS can only increase so that the reductions to the Public Health Laboratories currently proposed must not proceed. There need to be strict guidelines on the implications of the amendment to Section 38 of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 which allows for compulsory detention of AIDS sufferers and there needs to be local co-ordination of effort and faculties. For example, in Manchester a Committee has been established involving all the relevant statutory organisations such as DHAs, local authorities, the Public Health Laboratory, Blood Transfusion Service, CHCs, Voluntary Organisations and specialist voluntary bodies such as AIDSLINE. It is recommended that this should be developed nationwide.

Not surprisingly, there are a number of aspects of this issue raised this month.

Southend & District CHC has written to Norman Fowler expressing concern that the Government has decided to do away with the Health Education Council pointing out that while the Government's recognition that the issue of AIDS warrants a special health authority, it is the view of the CHC that the independence hitherto enjoyed by the HEC will be lost when the new body is set up. This might well jeopardise campaigns on health issues such as alcohol consumption and smoking where criticisms of the Government of the day are often necessary.

The CHC does not see the new body as an 'enhanced' version of the old, for if that had been the idea then all that would have been necessary would have been to increase the budget of the HEC as it was and appoint additional staff specialising in AIDS. If a new Health Authority is to be set up then it should be a central body to co-ordinate the different elements relating to the AIDS issue, not just the aspect of public education.

Peterborough CHC notes that the Government is setting up pilot schemes to supply free syringes for drug addicts in certain areas. It points out that Peterborough was already doing this and the resultant publicity has caused diabetics, and especially the mothers of diabetic children, to complain that they have to buy their syringes. Peterborough asks if it would not therefore be possible for diabetics to be prescribed free syringes as well? A number of other CHCs have also raised this issue.

Gavin Strang, Labour MP for Edinburgh East, drew seventh in the before-Christmas ballot for Private Members' Bills and is presenting his AIDS (Control) Bill covering three specific areas where he thinks the Government might need early legislation - a nationwide syringe and needle exchange system, mandatory requirements for public education - probably involving the schools - and the possible need to set up national screening facilities.

ACHCEW's Response to Government Consultation on Primary Care

ACHCEW's response was published on 19 January 1987 and received exceptionally wide media coverage. The response was based on ACHCEW's policy as defined by AGM resolutions, on what we heard from CHC Secretaries and members at the public meetings held by the Secretary of State as part of the review, and written copies of individual CHC responses to the two documents. ACHCEW has stressed to the Minister the need for the individual contributions from CHCs to be treated with proper consideration.

The ACHCEW response covered the Government's objectives, Funding, Public Satisfaction, Information and Choice, General Medical and Dental Services, Pharmaceutical Services, Effective Choice, Access to Services in both rural areas and inner cities, "Health Shops", Remuneration and Quality, Good Practice Allowances, Prevention, Complaints, Planning, Community Nursing and Patients' Rights.

On funding, ACHCEW comments that the Government's views seem mainly confined to the problems of controlling costs with improvements in services affected by 'the mechanisms analogous to those in the market place'. Consumer choice and an improved complaints procedure are 'sticks'. A Good Practice allowance is the 'carrot'. The sufficiency of these proposals in the absence of a commitment to provide more resources for primary care must be called into question.

A copy of the submission is available from ACHCEW on request (free of charge to member CHCs; otherwise £1.50 incl p & p).

London's Health Services

CHCs will already have seen a good deal of publicity in the media for the King's Fund Report on the problems facing the health services in inner London. The Chairmen of the 12 inner London DHAs commissioned the King's Fund to prepare a factual report detailing the current plans for inner London services and the result draws on the published Regional Strategic Plans as well as considering the main service and financial changes which have taken place since they were issued.

The key finding, which is described as 'remarkable', is that it is not in fact possible to draw a coherent and comprehensive picture of inner London's future health services from the published plans of the four Regions nor indeed from any of the unpublished documents to which the Fund had access. It appears that despite their best endeavours Regions have not been able to co-ordinate their approach to planning on a London wide basis and the tendency for planning to be effectively constrained by Regional Boundaries is the basis of the title of the Report, "Back to Back Planning".

Further findings which need highlighting are: Regional plans for inner London Districts require a reduction of £109M in the period 1983/4 to 1993/4, the equivalent of the combined annual cost of St. Thomas's, Barts and the Royal Free. This in turn involves a reduction of between 7% and 31% in each District's spending on acute services and an overall reduction of 1487 local acute beds. These reductions were anticipated to accompany a 15% decline in the number of hospital admissions by 1993/4 but, in fact, the number of admissions has not declined but actually increased by 2.5%, reflecting a national pattern. 1100 local acute beds, representing 74% of the planned 10 year bed reductions, were closed in the first two years of the strategic period (also reflecting a more general trend, but they yielded only £30.9M. (34.5%), of the planned 10 year reduction on local acute service spending. Thus, in the first two years of the planning period, one third of the planned revenue has been saved but three quarters of the beds targetted for reduction over the ten years have already had to be closed. The report asks, therefore, what this will mean to inner London health services and will they have to be reduced much further to achieve more savings?

This report - a must - is available from the King's Fund. Price £2.00.

Doctors will make it an Election issue

Senior doctors in Cornwall took almost unprecedented action in threatening to make health service in Cornwall an election issue. This followed the publication of the Labour Party's survey on shortage of hospital beds which drew particular attention to the position at the District General Hospital at Treリス in Truro.

Doctors confirmed that the hospital had been on full "red alert" for almost twelve months owing to shortage of beds, that they were considering sending patients 70 miles away to Plymouth. One doctor went so far as to say that beds were almost literally

still warm from their last occupant when a new patient was put in to them. Other points were that patients were not infrequently sent home too soon and had to be re-admitted, that emergency cases could spend up to four hours on a stretcher in a corridor while a desperate search was made for a bed and that patients awaiting surgery had to wait longer and longer. Senior consultant physician Dr. Michael Witherton, chairman of the Division of Medicine, gave a statement to the press pointing out that the turn around at Treliske was one of the fastest in the country, that the rapid turnover was causing patients to suffer and putting staff under intolerable strain and that the unit was one of the busiest in the whole country and yet it was always being left out when it came to funds.

The Labour Party's Report itself, which covers most areas of the country, sets out just how difficult it can be to get into hospital when you are ill, gives interesting comparisons between areas and does prove that whatever might be happening to the resources removed from the RAWPed inner city areas, they don't seem to be getting down to the most rural areas they are supposed to be helping. (The report itself is available free from The Labour Party Press Office, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT).

Cervical Cancer Smears

Norman Fowler is being questioned about an unpublished report on cervical cancer prepared five months ago which warns Ministers that immediate intervention is necessary to save life, says Pulse (29.12.86). The report, prepared by the DHSS's own statisticians, covers the period 1974/83 and shows a higher incidence of the disease in the north than in the south, yet another north/south divide.

It found "unacceptably high" rates of cervical cancer in three particular districts - South Tees, N.W. Durham and North Tyneside and in East Cumbria and Northumberland and Sunderland the incidence was higher than average and rising. The document stresses the impact of good screening services by reporting a lower than average incidence of cervical cancer in Gateshead where screening has improved. Perhaps CHCs should contact the DHSS and ask for a copy urgently.

Value for Money

The NHS should strive for much better value for money for the £700M spent on professional and technical staff, says a report by Sir Gordon Downey, Comptroller and Auditor General. He points out that some areas of the country employ up to 64 occupational therapists for every 100,000 people. Other areas "make do with five". The report does say that it is difficult to get the right number of physiotherapists and radiographers because the number of students is fixed by the cash available rather than by NHS needs.... He demands three major improvements: more exact matching of supply and demand so the right number of students are trained; a tight watch on staffing levels "which have been allowed to grow without fundamental review"; closer matching of staffing levels with workloads to take account of recent changes

in technology.

The report is available from HMSO price £8.10.

Nurses as Victims of Violence

Four out of five nurses in a sample survey conducted by the Royal College of Nursing have been victims of violent attacks over the last 12 months, almost half of them more than once, says The Independent of 8.1.87. Of the 459 questionnaires returned by nurses, 78% reported a violent attack and 48% said they had been subjected to physical violence. Twenty nurses said they were sexually abused and others complained of threatening behaviour. Most felt they did not have adequate protection. Nearly half the cases caused personal injury and most attacks involved scratching, punching and biting although some nurses received assaults serious enough to result in broken limbs and permanent back problems. In one incident a pregnant nurse was kicked in the stomach and in another a patient attempted to strangle a nurse. In nearly half the cases alcohol abuse contributed to the attack and in 53% the assault was linked with mental illness. The Royal College of Nursing said that attacks on staff were on the increase and Health Authorities should provide personal alarms and run training courses.

Patients' Opinions

The Journal of the Royal College of GPs devoted a paper in its issue no. 36 of November 1986 to the results of a CHC survey of 105 patients selected from a single general practice. The survey was undertaken by Medway CHC and the author of the paper, Colin Smith, was extremely complimentary about the information the CHC produced and the way it was presented. At the end of his paper he says: "The survey demonstrates how a Community Health Council can successfully be involved in obtaining patients' opinions on the performance of a GP within his or her practice in a manner which usefully complements the "What sort of doctors?" assessment."

Tobacco and Health

U.S. Tobacco is planning to expand production of Skoal Bandits - chewing tobacco - at its east Kilbride factory in Scotland. The workforce will be increased from 30 to 100. 90% of factory production goes to the Middle East and 12 European countries.

BBC producer David Edwards was reprimanded by the corporation's Director General following a strongly worded letter he sent to the Tobacco Advisory Council. He had produced a radio programme which focussed on doctors opposed to sports sponsorship by tobacco companies and the TAC complained to the BBC of bias. Replying, in the letter which earned him a reprimand, Mr. Edwards said that there were some subjects where balance would be immoral. "You are financed by an industry which, at best, poisons tens of thousands of people every year. At worst, its products are lethal."

(From ASH information bulletin No. 200 5.12.86).

Patient Insurance

Following the highly successful workshop at our AGM on No Fault Compensation, the workshop's convenor, Emrys Roberts, offered to set up a Working Party and report on the position in this country and how such a scheme operates in Scandinavia and New Zealand. During October fifteen members of the Swedish Patient Insurance Scheme visited London and the Working Group was asked to arrange a programme for their visit. In a report presented to the Standing Committee, the Working Group sets out in detail what is needed and strongly recommends that ACHCEW campaign for the establishment of a Patient Insurance Scheme within the NHS in Britain.

Family Record Cards

How useful are family record cards for GPs? A paper in the Journal of the Royal College of GPs (36.506-509) looked at an experiment in one practice where 1825 households had family record cards. The capital cost was £108 and the time taken by the secretary to deal with the cards was 1638 hours - about six and a half hours a week. Before the cards were introduced most of the information on them was "held in doctors' heads" say the authors and little was written in the records even if the doctor thought the information relevant. After the introduction of the cards doctors had a far better overview of the family at 98% of consultations and used them, on average, in 95% of consultations. The doctors believed the cards were useful in establishing rapport, identifying patients concerns, obtaining relevant history, forming diagnostic hypothesis and managing the present complaint.

IN PARLIAMENT

Thirteenth in the ballot for Private Members' Bills is Terry Lewis's Community Health Councils (Access to Information) Bill, to give the public greater access to meetings of CHCs and to the information which they hold. This is sponsored by a number of Labour MPs and is described in The Lancet of 27.12.86 as "being unlikely to set off waves of uncontrollable Ministerial enthusiasm."

MP Archy Kirkwood's Private Members' Bill on Access to Personal Files will be debated in the House of Commons on 20 February. It has cross-party support and details of its provisions are given below. This is a subject on which CHCs who support the Bill in principle are asked by him to write to their own MPs asking them to vote for it on the day. An article that Mr. Kirkwood has contributed is included below:

What's in my File?

by Archy Kirkwood MP.

"On February 20 my private members Bill to give people a right to

see files about themselves will be debated in the House of Commons. The Access to Personal Files Bill would allow people to see and correct their own or their children's medical, educational, housing, employment, social services, benefit, credit and certain other records.

A limited right of access - to information held on computer only - is due to come into force later this year under the Data Protection Act. But most of the records people will want to see are held not on computer but on paper, and these are the records people would be able to see under my Bill.

It is already supported in principle by 150 MPs of all parties; by the three major local authority associations, and by more than a hundred of the leading consumer and voluntary organisations in the country. As long as the Government itself does not oppose it, it stands an excellent chance of becoming law.

The principle is simple; these records are about us. They are the basis on which decisions about the most important aspects of our lives may be taken. We should be able to see them.

This makes sense for practical reasons. Records may contain errors which could lead to a person being denied a benefit or treatment they need. One London doctor who allows patients to see their medical notes reported recently that 12% found errors. Another doctor who checked the accuracy with which summaries of his case notes were being prepared found that 27% of entries about diagnoses contained mistakes or omissions, more than half of them "serious".

Often the very existence of secret records creates suspicion. People may fear that information is being deliberately withheld from them or that their efforts to obtain what they need are being ignored or obstructed. Authorities who have voluntarily opened their records report that people often come to see their records out of suspicion, but go away impressed. People who are properly informed are able to play a real part in decisions about themselves.

Finally, access would provide a safeguard against the type of unsubstantiated speculation or ill considered assumption that is sometime made. If record holders know their remarks can be seen they will be more careful and objective in their reporting.

The Bill contains a number of important safeguards. Personal information about someone else would not be disclosed, nor would information which would expose a third party to risk of attack or harm. Information which would identify a member of the family or public who had spoken to the record holder about the subject of the file in confidence would not be disclosed, but the identity of professional staff such as teachers or social workers who had contributed to the record would be available.

A doctor or social worker who thought a person might be distressed by the record could insist on being present when it was read, to provide explanation or support. And if there was a risk of someone coming to serious harm, the Bill would allow access to be deferred for up to six months, so that disclosure

would take place after rather than in the midst of an acute crisis or so information could be provided step by step. But information couldn't be withheld altogether. If the person thought that even the delay was unacceptable, there would be a right of appeal.

Parents can apply for records of their under-16 year old children, but the record holder would have to withhold any information given by the child in confidence, for example about problems in the home or information which if disclosed to the parent would expose the child to risk.

Record holders themselves are protected from libel actions by people who find something unflattering has been written on their files. Provided the comments have been made in good faith, they are protected by what is known as 'qualified privilege'. But a person who has been damaged by inaccurate information would be able to apply to the court for compensation from the record holder (as they already can under the Data Protection Act).

Finally, the Bill would only apply to information recorded after it became law, not to old files. However, if an earlier document was later used as the basis for a decision about the person, that document (though not the rest of the earlier file) would after the decision be open to inspection.

All these provisions have already been implemented by a growing number of doctors, social workers, teachers, employers and local authorities - without problems. They report that people respond positively to the trust implied by opening records, and that it creates a better working relationship with them."

AROUND THE CHCS

Rochdale CHC has written to Norman Fowler on the subject of additives in both adults' and children's medicines. Medicines, which contain additives that are not referred to on the labelling it says, are available both for sale and through NHS prescriptions. A number of consumers have had significant allergic reactions to some of the commonly used flavourings and colourings while others merely like to know what they are consuming. The CHC asks the Minister to consider introducing legislation requiring manufacturers of medicines to explain the 'non active' contents of their products in the same way in which foodstuff manufacturers do through proper labelling.

Dewsbury CHC Secretary, Joy Gunter has been attending Committee Meetings of Health Concern on behalf of ACHCEW. She feels that it has an immense influence because of the people who are involved in it and that the Committee provides a useful non-political forum for those of us determined to maintain the standards of the NHS. She has details of the activities and information produced by Health Concern whose major conference topic for 1987 is "Health for All by the Year 2000". For further information and copies of relevant papers, contact Joy Gunter at Dewsbury CHC.

South Birmingham CHC has singled out two services run by the DHA for particular praise. One is the Gate House project at Rubery

Hill hospital which helps people who have had a spell in hospital to start life again in the community. The scheme is run by the hospital's Occupational Therapy Department and gives really practical assistance such as finding patients a place to live, getting furniture and other equipment for their homes and helping them claim the benefits to which they are entitled. Patients live in The Gate House for several weeks doing their own shopping and cooking but able to keep in touch with staff at the hospital at any time.

The second is the play schemes project at Selly Oak hospital which is aimed to make going into hospital less of an ordeal for children and parents. The schemes now operate in the Outpatients and Accident and Emergency departments as well as on children's wards. The scheme's co-ordinator, Joy Archer, said they were very pleased to get recognition from the CHC for their work.

However, wearing its other hat, that of watchdog, South Birmingham says its worst fears were confirmed when they learned that the DHA is facing a £900,000 overspend at the end of this financial year and that the changes proposed to deal with the situation are not likely to be in the best interests of patients, especially the re-allocation of surgical beds for use for medical cases which can only mean longer waiting lists for people needing general surgery.

Wandsworth CHC - has managed to get the decision on the closure of St. James's Hospital in its area postponed. Following the meeting of the DHA last year when the closure was discussed, the CHC took legal advice on the propriety of the decisions reached and the advice they received was that the CHC had not been properly consulted over two important aspects of the closure and that they had a strong case to take the matter to court.

The CHC wrote to the RHA pointing this out and as a result the RHA deferred its decision and offered the CHC a 28 day consultation period. The CHC were not happy with the response pointing out that it was far from clear what the CHC was being offered consultation on. In a letter to the RHA it said that it was willing to accept the offer in principle as a satisfactory resolution to one of the points raised, but stressed its deep concern over the lack of consultation and pointed out that it was still prepared to invoke the law if necessary. Alan Mathewson, chair of the CHC says: "Clearly we are very happy that the RHA has agreed to defer its decision on St. James' and has tacitly recognised the failure of the DHA to carry out consultation properly... we have shown the DHA that they cannot ride roughshod over us and must take our views into consideration. "Equally clearly, we are still far from happy with the RHA's response as a whole." The CHC hopes the matter will be resolved without court action, but is determined to press ahead should this be necessary.

Rochdale CHC - has been running into problems trying to establish a sensible policy for transfer of patients across regional boundaries. This came about following an approach from a parent whose severely mentally handicapped daughter lived ten miles from her home in Lancashire but in a Yorkshire region. The parent wanted her transferred to community care in Rochdale. The initial problems appeared to be caused by delays in sorting out

inter-regional finance but further correspondence has increased doubts that anything is happening at all, due to disagreement on two matters (a) the whole concept of what Care in the Community is all about and (b) the allocation of finance. Further research appears to show a great muddle over who is responsible for what, not only in this case but in general. Rochdale is asking NWRCHC members to write to Norman Fowler requesting him to instruct RHAs to give proper consideration to facilitating transfers across NHS Regional boundaries if this is desired by patients and parents and also to instruct them to agree between themselves within a three month period a system of transferring finance accompanying the transfer of patients. Individual CHCs are asked to consult locally and find out if there are other relatives/carers who would like their child returned to community care.

Brighton CHC - wish to thank those CHCs who returned their questionnaires on discharge policy following their publication of "Who Really Cares?" Thirty questionnaires have been returned to date (8 January 1987). Would any other CHC wishing to respond please do so by 31 March 1987.

Central Manchester CHC - has now updated its AIDS information service which contains two computer printouts giving press cuttings, now totally about 300, and another list giving other items stocked in the CHC office. Copies of the computer printout can be supplied on request and photocopies of individual items supplied, or alternatively, Carol Kenway, can give details of how to obtain publications. The CHC would welcome any local item of information which has been produced. Manchester also suggests that CHCs inform ACHCEW on the position in their areas and what action, if any, they are taking, so that this information can be circulated through the Newsletter. The application for funding for the Manchester AIDSLINE, originally submitted by the CHC, to the RHA has been successful and they have been given funding of £25,000 per year.

Questionnaire on Computing

Liz Watson would like to thank all those who responded to the questionnaire on computing that was distributed with the last issue of Community Health News. 129 CHCs replied, an excellent response, but there is still time for those who have not returned the questionnaire to do so.

Information wanted

North Tyneside CHC - is co-operating with its FPC to increase the uptake of exemption from prescription charges. The two main areas identified for action are providing information on where people can get advice on how to apply under the low income provisions, and providing sixteen-year-olds with information on their entitlement to exemption from prescription charges, cost of dental care, etc. The CHC would like to know if any other CHCs have been involved in this sort of campaign and if they have examples of posters, leaflets and other publicity material. If so, North Tyneside would appreciate copies.

South Warwickshire CHC - would like to know of any special room thermometers produced with a view to use by elderly or handicapped people in particular. So far they know of two types (a) a chemically treated 'plastic' strip by Workbridge of Northampton and (b) a dial with an arrow operated by a metal strip by "Day Impex" of Colchester. Both cost around 30p each if purchased in bulk but the latter so far looks the best choice. Do any CHCs know of any other models? Information as soon as possible please to South Warwickshire CHC, Freepost, 17 Dormer Place, Leamington Spa, CV32 5AA.

Swindon and District CHC - will shortly be entering into formal consultation with its DHA over the closure of a GP Maternity Unit at a small acute/community hospital. Swindon would welcome any information from other CHCs who have faced a similar situation. In particular they would like to know whether the reasons behind the closure of such units have been (1) an inability to recruit sufficient midwives which is the case in this area or (2) a change in the philosophy and practice of maternity care or (3) financial restraints. Swindon recognises there is a national shortage of midwives and would welcome any information on the shortage and on any steps being taken nationally to address this problem.

North West Surrey CHC - has been contacted about the NHS attitude towards alternative medicine and the difficulty in obtaining homeopathic treatment through the NHS. Have any other CHCs had experience of dealing with this problem and have they any views on it? If so, please contact North West Surrey.

CHC Publications, Surveys, etc.

Following a conference on the health care needs of homeless people organised by GLACHC, a questionnaire was sent out to London CHCs to find out their knowledge of the extent of the problem. Haringey CHC has now published its findings. It deplores the increasing number of people having to spend time in sub-standard temporary accommodation pointing out that no matter how much health and other professionals prop up the homeless it does not solve their basic need for a home. Haringey recommends among other things that there should be a full time health visitor whose job includes liaising with housing departments, local hotels and hostels; basic information on health should be provided to all those housing the homeless giving names and addresses of local GPs, health clinics, accident departments, dentists, antenatal clinics, etc; that where several DHAs come within one area then the logistics must be discussed, possibly by the CHC, with housing representatives present, that health services should make determined efforts to recruit people who speak appropriate community languages and the CHC raises a number of points on this particular issue. There should be routine health checks on all new school pupils, drop in community mental health centres (what starts as a housing problem can lead to a mental health problem); that there should be better liaison between health, social services and housing on the subject of homelessness and, finally, Haringey underlines the urgent need for accommodation for the young single homeless.

Health Care for Homeless People - is available from Haringey CHC.

Cornwall CHC - has surveyed the outpatients' departments of the various hospitals within its remit and found a dire situation at The City Hospital in Truro. Housed in old Dickensian Work House buildings, the CHC discovered some 65,000 patients a year were being put through clinics designed for 15,000. Too many waiting areas had no facilities for patients at all and delays of over one hour past an appointment time were common. One unit general manager told the CHC that some consultants took the view that their time was more valuable than that of their patients and therefore it was necessary to ensure a steady supply of patients at the clinic even if this resulted in some of them having a long wait! Patients were not pleased. The condition of this hospital came in for much criticism although the staff were praised for the way they coped. (One official privately described City Hospital to the CHC as 'a rat hole'.) On the positive side a computer controlled outpatients' appointments system at West Cornwall Hospital in Penzance was working well.

A Review of Outpatients Clinics - available from Cornwall CHC.

Nottingham CHC - has produced a handbook on Services for the Elderly in its district covering just about everything from the aids and equipment available to how to obtain the disabled persons parking disc.

Services for the Elderly is obtainable from the CHC.

Still on the subject of the elderly, Waltham Forest CHC, in collaboration with Age Concern, has published the report of a seminar on the subject of the "Health Needs of Elderly People from Ethnic Minority Groups". Among the points to be emphasized is the difference in attitude. For instance, Afro-Caribbean people use the term "elders" when discussing their elderly people, a term which denotes real respect. Isolation was a particular problem with elderly Afro-Caribbean people who live alone and without family support and feeling that they would be out of place in Day Centres among the indigenous population. Also, totally against the thrust of the propaganda dispensed in some quarters, many Afro-Caribbean elderly people feel that to maintain their self-respect they should not even take up the benefits to which they are entitled. Asian speakers discussed the problems of diet, especially in large institutions like hospitals and it was stressed that the question of interpreters is still often ignored. Altogether this is a fascinating and thought-provoking document and is well worth reading for all those involved in problems of this kind.

It is available from Waltham Forest CHC.

Huntingdon CHC has produced 50,000 copies of a new and comprehensive guide to local health services and issued them to every home in its district. The 75 page reference book gives details of all the local NHS facilities and other sources of health related help and advice. It is the first such guide to such services and aims to make the information as comprehensive as possible, covering not only all the obvious but much needed information on hospitals, dentists, GPs., etc., but also where to go for help and advice in cases of drug addiction, etc., what action to take in emergencies, the uses of alternative medicine

and how to cope with bereavement. The guide took a year's research, the bulk of the compilation being carried out by one researcher under an MSC Community Programme Scheme. Producing, printing and distributing the Handbook cost approximately £9,000 and it was all raised by the CHC. The RHA, DHA and local councils contributed towards its cost. It is well designed and well produced and is a good example of the kind of extremely professional publications which some CHCs now publish.

Who plans our Survival? - is the name of a report from Swindon CHC and the Thamesdown Voluntary Service Centre, based on the "frustrations, hopes and aspirations of 80 people representing 38 voluntary organisations, and the Swindon and District CHC who came together to share information and concern about how their groups related to Health and Social Services - or don't." It is a report which would be of value to any CHC anywhere - you are given strict instructions to read all of it and if you don't you are told to go back and try again as you will have missed a lot.... Amongst the foremost issues raised is that of information needs and the manner in which information is given; treating the patient as a whole person not a collection of symptoms and problems; 'user friendly' services; and linking in NHS care with community care. It is available from Swindon CHC.

Hackney's guide to health services for pensioners in Hackney and the City is now published. It will be available free to all Hackney pensioners from libraries or health centre or, on request, from the CHC.

The Isle of Anglesey CHC - has tackled the highly contentious subject of fluoridation of water and public reaction to it. It organised a survey on public attitudes and found a resounding "no" to the chemical additive. Of those who returned the questionnaires 300 were in favour, 216 did not know and 963 (63 per cent) did not want their water with fluoride. Further details from Isle of Anglesey CHC.

Information for people who experience mental health problems is contained in a new booklet "What? Where? How?" produced by North Tyneside Community Health Council.

There are sections on health and local authority services, voluntary organisations, employment, housing, the mental health act, financial help and where to go to get further advice in the free booklet available from the CHC at 15 Albion House, Sidney Street, North Shields. Tel: 0632 581056.

Correction

The cost of the report on the travelling day hospital for the elderly mentally ill in Portsmouth, "Something to Look Forward to" is £5.20 not £3.20 as in our last issue.

GENERAL PUBLICATIONS

Prevention News is a new publication from Islington Health Education Department. It has devoted much of its first issue to the problem of AIDS and takes up the statement that "Health Education is the only response" but what kind of health education and how should information be utilised? Of 192 health districts approached to find out what their policy was on AIDS 60% said they had no policy, 95% said they had no full-time AIDS worker, 62% said they did have a working party but 85% said they were not producing any resources specifically related to AIDS. Copies of this issue and further details from David Penter, Islington Health Education Department, Royal Northern Hospital, Holloway Road, London N7 6LD.

Women and Smoking - A Handbook for Action is published by the Health Education Council. It is a sad fact that the only major group among whom smoking is actually increasing is young women. One in three women smoke and smokers run the risk of an earlier menopause, reduced fertility, smaller babies and higher risk of lung cancer and heart disease. This is a handbook for action designed to help women stop, counter the arguments of the tobacco industry, protect children and publicise action against smoking. It is available from HEC, 78 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 14H. Price £2.00.

Stroke - A Handbook for the Patient's Family by Graham Mulley is self-explanatory and is available from the Chest, Heart and Stroke Association, Tavistock House North, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JE. Price 50p.

Fair Pay for NHS Staff is a published paper from the Liberal Party on 'Priorities for Liberals in Government'. It argues for a complete reform of the NHS pay structure to make it less complex and to enable it to make a more efficient use of its resources.

It is available from Liberal Party Publications, The Birchcliffe Centre, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire HX7 8DG. Price £1.

Acting with Authority is a consultative paper on the appointment, training and work of DHA members. It is available from NAHA, Garth House, 47 Edgbaston Park Road, Birmingham B15 2RS and NAHA would be interested in comments on it from CHCs by 6 April. There will be a special conference on the subject organised by NAHA on 19 February. For details see 'Coming Events'.

Audit Commission Review - Making a Reality of Community Care

This is a must for all CHCs as it backs up so much of what CHCs are discovering for themselves in a clear and practical way. (It is a vast improvement on some Audit Commission documents which have been almost impenetrable). It tends to look on the bright side but its information, especially in the section marked "the reality" is of special interest.

Copies of the full report can be obtained from HMSO Price £9 but there is an excellent digest which can be obtained from HMSO books, PC13A/1, PO Box 276, London SW8 5DT free.

A Better Life is the name of a campaign launched by MIND and the organisation will be publishing a newsletter at regular intervals this year, together with campaign material, posters, draft reports, etc. For copies of the initial material, contact MIND, 22 Harley Street, London W1N 2ED.

The Alcohol Services Information Pack, published by Good Practices in Mental Health and Alcohol Concern, aims to draw attention to information on planning alcohol services, gives details of schemes working in different parts of the country, has papers on alcohol education and gives a list of useful organisations and further reading.

The pack costs £2.95 and is available from GPMH, 380-384 Harrow Road, London W9 2HU.

Food Facts - A Statistical Guide to the UK Food System contains up-to-date information on many aspects of Britain's food, pointing to the unequal distribution of power and resources and the problems this creates - e.g. the food industry spends £325M on advertising but the Health Education Council has only £750,000 to promote healthy eating. The three top chocolate producers spent £66.7M on advertising but only £3M was spent on advertising fresh fruit and vegetables. Heart disease kills 3 in 10 of all men and 2 in 10 of all women and it cost the NHS £323M in 1985. The Guide is available from The London Food Commission, PO Box 291, London N.5. Price 50p.

Hitting the Skids - A catalogue of NHS Cuts in London is published by London Health Emergency and it makes very gloomy reading indeed. It will also be useful for London CHCs arguing for more resources. It is published by LHE, 335 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Price £3.

North West Thames RHA has published a report on Managing Customer Relationships. It is available from the RHA, 40 Eastbourne Terrace, London W2 3QR. Price £5.00.

Making The Break - parents' views about adults with a mental handicap leaving home. This book explores parents' views on a whole range of key issues and examines their implications for policy. It also gives information on the number and circumstances of those caring for mentally handicapped adults in two local authority areas. It is available from Book Sales, Kings Fund Centre, 126 Albert Street, London NW1 7NF. Price £3.00.

The Standing Conference for Voluntary Organisations working for Mentally Handicapped people in Wales has published the report of its working group. It is available from SCOVO, Llys Ifor, Crescent Road, Caerphilly CF8 1XL.

The irradiation of food is a high topical issue and the London Food Commission has produced a paperback on the subject Food Irradiation - The Facts. Its author, Tony Webb, expresses the concern and reservations of many experts and most consumer organisations, pointing out that adverse effects include unique chemical changes, loss of vitamins, of flavours, smells, the necessity of increased additives to offset undesirable side effects and adverse health effects in animals and humans fed on irradiated food. Unfortunately irradiation is most likely to be used on just those foods we are advised to eat more of such as poultry, fish, grains, fresh fruit and vegetables. There are considerable pressures to relax the present ban on irradiating food in this country.

The book is obtainable from the London Food Commission, PO Box 291, London N5 1DU. Price £1.95.

Health and Help! 1987/8 is a guide to organisations that can help with a whole range of problems compiled from Thames Television's HELP! programme. It is based on the many enquiries that came into Thames as a result. It is published by the Bedford Square Press at £2.95.

Living Well Into Old Age is a project paper from the King's Fund on applying principles of good practice to services for people with dementia. It is available from the Fund. Price £2.50.

Political Issues in Nursing Vol 2 ed. Rosemary White is very much a book for professionals covering both national and international nursing practice. It is published by John Wiley & Sons Price £9.95. Similarly a tome for pros. is Research in Preventive Community Nursing Care ed. by Alison White. Also from John Wiley. Price £9.95.

Training Structure in the NHS. This is a working paper from "Training in Health and Race" which looks at management, the medical profession, nursing, and "other relevant organisations." I quote its ENTIRE information, suggestions, recommendations, etc. on CHCs: "CHCs are statutory bodies at District level whose main purpose is to represent the interests of the community to the local health services. They have 10-24 members, one third nominated by local voluntary organisations, half nominated by local authority and one sixth nominated by RHAs." Gosh! Isn't that fantastic.... The booklet is available free from Leeds CVS, 229 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 9LF.

Mencap has produced a London Directory of Services for families with young children with special needs. It is extremely well designed and comprehensive and costs £2.50 from the MENCAP bookshop, 123 Golden Lane, London EC1Y 0RT. It would be very useful to CHCs too.

Care of the Dying published by NAHA is an extremely important document as it deals with a subject which has exercised many CHCs in recent years. It is particularly apposite now with the growing shadow of AIDS. Death has superseded sex as the great

unmentionable (although you wouldn't think so to hear some of the reaction to the AIDS campaign). The booklet is the result of a King's Fund/NAHA working party and covers the principles of good terminal care, components of a comprehensive service for the dying, care of the dying in hospital, criteria for assessing terminal care schemes, funding of terminal care facilities, training in care of the dying and other information and advice. It is full of good suggestions and deals with problems with great sensitivity, such as the need to provide dying hospital patients with "tempting and nourishing food" something which may be difficult, it admits, in centralised kitchens. The needs of relatives should be taken into account with provision of meals for them, adequate privacy and overnight accommodation. There is insufficient space to do more than give a brief report but it is certainly worth contacting NAHA for a copy.

NAHA, Garth House, 47 Edgbaston Park Road, Birmingham B15 2RS.

W.Is and Cervical Cancer Screening

Back in 1983 the National Federation of Women's Institutes and the Women's National Cancer Control Campaign joined together to work on a survey to establish the extent of women's knowledge of the system of cervical cancer screening and how appropriate it was to their needs. A questionnaire was circulated to all 9,200 W.Is in England and Wales. The response was very high - 9,532 - showing that in some cases more than one from a W.I had responded. Women in the North were more responsive than those in the South East. As one of the problems of screening has been to pull in women in the higher age groups it was particularly relevant that the bulk of responses came from women over 40. 97% of those answering had been tested. Reasons for not attending included fears as to how painful the test would be, embarrassment, fears of the result and a dislike of having to see a male doctor. 65% of those responding said a test had never been suggested by their doctor and in some cases their doctors had actually been opposed to it, saying that women under 35 were not at risk. These women had had to find somewhere to go on their own initiative. 62% would like the tests carried out at Well Women's Clinics. Women in rural areas have special problems, "there is only one doctor here and he is not keen on doing tests. The nearest town is 20 miles away and getting there means changing buses." The organisers were concerned that 68% of the women had never had any form of recall and this was coupled with even greater concern that results of tests were not automatically made available. Based on the evidence of the survey, a wide range of bodies was contacted for their response. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, for instance, suggested an education programme through the tabloid press and television at peak times, along with all radio outlets, in order to reach as many people as possible. The Survey, "Cervical Cancer" is available from the National Federation of Women's Institutes, 39 Eccleston Street, London SW1 W9NT.

Presumably all CHCs will have now received their copy of the Annual Report of the NHS for 1985/6 from the DHSS. According to Norman Fowler in his foreword, this report, "like its predecessors, tells of record progress made in a service which is

of real importance to everyone in the country. In 1985 there were almost 37.5 million hospital out-patient attendances; over 6.75 million in-patient cases; and almost one million day patient cases. These are all new records and a tribute to the hard work and dedication of health service staff." Problems? Well the waiting lists and times need to be reduced and the move towards care in the community "carefully co-ordinated". Then there's AIDS. "However the NHS is prepared to meet these challenges. It is now better financed and better managed...." If by any chance you don't have your copy of this bland document then contact the DHSS, otherwise the going price is £8.50 from HMSO.

Two books on Aids. AIDS The Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome by Victor G. Daniels is described as an up-to-date compilation of current knowledge on the subject. AIDS - Questions and Answers, also by Dr. Daniels, is designed as a general handbook in a simple question and answer format. Both are published by Cambridge Medical Books, the first at £9.95 and the second at £3.75.

COMING EVENTS

The NAHA Conference mentioned elsewhere will take place on 19 February at Kensington Town Hall. It aims to cover such topics as:- size and composition of authorities, appointments procedures; member training and members remuneration. The implications for health authority members of general management will also be a key issue to be debated at the Conference. Cost per person is £52 plus VAT (£59.80) members or £62. plus VAT (£71.30) non members and forms are available from Mrs. Ann Mason, Conference Manager, at NAHA, Garth House, 47 Edgbaston Park Road, Birmingham B15 2RS. Tel: (021) 471 4444.

After all the frozen pipes and burst mains, water is in the news. The Industrial Water Society would like us to note that they are holding a conference on The Effective Use and Control of Water in Commercial Buildings on 5 March at the Institution of Civil Engineers in London. There are public health considerations inherent in this subject and one of these will be discussed and that is "Environmental Aspects of Water Use." But the attendance fee goes into our competition for very expensive conferences - £115.00 for one day, although you do get lunch. Details from The Industrial Water Society, 1 Tolson's Mill, Lichfield Street, Fazeley, Tamworth, Staffs.

The Royal Society of Health is running a series of lectures on the following subjects: 'Changes in Legislation and Optometry' on 24th February at The British College of Ophthalmic Opticians. 'Schizophrenia: Helping the Family to Cope' on 4 March at the Institute of Physics, Belgrave Square, London SW1. 'How Children Think. Effective Health Education' on 5 March at Birmingham Dental Hospital. 'Food Labelling and Nutrition' on 19 March at Society of Chemical Industry, 14 Belgrave Square, London SW1. 'Primary Health Care - Where Next?' on 18 March at Westminster Cathedral Conference Centre. 'Nurses Role in Nutrition' on 27

March at the above venue.

Each lecture costs £5 to attend and details can be obtained from The Conference Department, Royal Society of Health, R.S.H. House, St. George's Drive, London SW1.

The Annual Conference of the Interdisciplinary Association of Mental Health Workers will take place from 5 to 7 April at the City University, London. The theme will be "Mental Health - Meeting Needs in the 90s". Closing date for applications is 13 March. The fee for non-members £55 non residential and between £75 and £87 residential. Details from Felicity Sykes, Block AA, Department of Education Studies, Surrey University, Guildford GU2 5SH.

"Helping the Community to Care - The Government Initiative" is the title of a one-day seminar to be held at the Birmingham International Hotel Birmingham on 11 March 1987. The seminar is being organised by the Institute of Society Welfare and the fee is £28 including lunch and tea. Application forms from The Secretary, 239 Weston Road, Stafford ST16 3SL and these should be returned by 23 February 1987.

"Disabled Persons Act 1986 - Benefit or Burden" is the theme of a series of conferences RADAR and MIND are running in different parts of the country. The first will be held at the Albermarle Centre, Taunton on 13 March. Others will be held in Chester, London, East Anglia, Barnsley, Birmingham and Gateshead. The cost of each conference will be £30 with a number of free places for those who are unwaged. For further details contact the Conference Office, MIND, 22 Harley Street, London W1N 2ED.

The National Schizophrenia Fellowship is running a series of conferences and courses this year, the first being an Advocacy Study Day on 24 February at the Holborn Room, YWCA Central Club, Great Russell Street, London WC1. Price is £5. and includes an information pack. Other meetings and conferences cover subjects such as the Advances in Biological Research, Welfare Benefits for Mentally Ill People, Choices in Housing for People with Mental Disorders, Employment and Useful Alternatives for People with long Term Psychiatric Disability and it ends with a conference for social workers and allied professionals on Schizophrenia: Meeting the Needs in the Community. For further details contact the National Schizophrenia Fellowship, 78 Victoria Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 4NS.

Training the Trainers is the title of a programme organised by Training in Health and Race, a subject which was discussed in one of our workshops at Canterbury. The programme covers many aspects of the subject but concentrates on nutrition for its one-day workshop. Fees are dependent on how the programme is organised to suit a particular organisation so further details need to be obtained from Training in Health and Race, 229 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 9LF.

Advocacy for Devalued People

Professor Wold Wolfensberger, of Syracuse University, New York, will present a four day workshop, 3-6 November 1987 on the urgent need for social advocacies on behalf of handicapped and other devalued people. It will cover what social advocacies are and why they are needed, especially in the light of contemporary developments in society; the history of various social advocacy measures since antiquity, and lessons that can be learned from their successes and failures; why and how social advocacies are commonly attacked and weakened. There will be special emphasis on voluntary, personal forms of advocacy, including citizen advocacy, and the role of voluntary associations in conducting social advocacies.

It will be held at St. Annes, Lancashire. Further details from Janet Dean, Citizen First-North West, Oakenhurst Road, Blackburn, BB2 1PP. Tel: 0254 679421.

Birmingham University is continuing its courses for CHCs. Course 1 on Complaints and Redress is on 13 March. It looks at the current procedure, asks how effective and efficient it is and questions the role of the CHC. Course 2 on 12 June is on Quality - Slogan or Substance? This discusses how CHCs see their own role in a quality strategy. On each course there will be expert speakers to discuss aspects of the theme but also opportunities for general discussion. Enrolment for the courses is essential as numbers are very limited. The fee for each course is £12 including refreshments and a buffet lunch. If enrolment is made for both courses, then the fee is £20. The venue is "Winterbourne". 58 Edgbaston Park Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT. It has ample parking and is easily accessible by bus or train. All enquiries - as soon as possible please - to Department of Extramural Studies, "Winterbourne". Tel: 021-472 1301 ex. 2186.

DIRECTORY CHANGES

- Page 4: South Cumbria CHC.
Secretary - Mr. Gordon Hearsey.
- Page 9: Enfield CHC.
Secretary - Sue Cripps.
- Page 15: Hereford CHC. New Address:-
27 St. Owen Street,
Hereford
HR1 2JB.
(Telephone remains: (0432) 58491).
- Page 15: East Birmingham CHC.
Secretary - Mr. John Stewart.
- Page 15: Kidderminster CHC. Additional telephone line
Tel. no. (0562) 60243 - first line.
(0562) 753984 - extra telephone line.

Page 15: North Birmingham CHC.
Secretary - Mrs. Sheila A. West.

Page 17: Tameside & Glossop CHC.
Secretary - Mr. David Owen.
N.B. Tel. No. (061) 366 7623.

WOMEN AND SMOKING

A handbook for action



One in three women still smokes, running the risk of an earlier menopause, reduced fertility, smaller babies, and higher rates of lung cancer and heart disease.

Although the number of women smokers is falling, women are giving up at a slower rate than men. And evidence suggests that young girls are smoking more than boys.

Women and smoking: a handbook for action (AS36) explores these issues and offers new insights and practical solutions. Written by women and for women, this lively, illustrated handbook will tell you everything you need to know to combat this major health problem, including tips on:

how to stop smoking

organising stop smoking groups

countering the arguments of the tobacco industry

protecting children

publicising action against smoking.

This authoritative and well-researched handbook tackles just about every aspect of smoking, from the health risks involved, to the history of cigarette advertising, smoking at work, passive smoking, oral tobacco, smoking and the family environment, and smoking and the health service.

There is also an extensive bibliography, and a list of useful contacts.

Format: A4, 32pp, Illustrated. ISBN 0 903652 09 9

Copies of **Women and smoking: a handbook for action** can be obtained from the Supplies Department, Health Education Council, 78 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1AH. Each copy costs £2.00 including post and packing.



ORDER FORM

Women and smoking: a handbook for action

Please send me copy/ies of the above book at £2.00 each including post and packing. I enclose a cheque for £..... made payable to the Health Education Council.

Name Signature

Address
