

Local Authorities carrying out  
Maternity and Child  
Welfare Schemes.

TRAINING OF HEALTH VISITORS.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH,  
Whitehall, S.W. 1.

9th February, 1925.

SIR,

1. I am directed by the Minister of Health to forward, for the information of the Local Authority, copies of a Memorandum which he has issued specifying the conditions on which grants will in future be made from the Exchequer for the training of Health Visitors. It will be observed that as from the 1st April, 1925, these grants will be paid by the Minister instead of the Board of Education.

2. It will be remembered that in the Memorandum of July, 1922 (Memo. 65/M.C.W.) with reference to the training of Health Visitors, certain qualifications were mentioned as being desirable for a woman appointed as Health Visitor. This question has again been under consideration in the light of the experience gained since the issue of Memo. 65/M.C.W. and in connection with the transfer to this Department of the responsibility for the administration of the Exchequer grants in aid of training.

3. The duties of a Health Visitor vary according to the district in which she is employed. Her primary duty consists in the home visiting and general supervision of children under school age in her district; she is also usually expected to attend at the Maternity and Child Welfare Centre and may be called upon to advise the mothers on a variety of questions concerning the care and upbringing of their children, as well as their own personal health and hygiene during pregnancy and lactation. In addition, her duties may frequently include school nursing, visiting of tuberculous patients, making special inquiries or investigations, and so forth. It is therefore necessary that a Health Visitor should possess not only good sense and an acceptable personality, but also the trained mind and the professional qualifications which will enable her to deal wisely with the problems which may come before her. There appears to be general agreement that as a rule the duties of a Health Visitor can best be carried out by a woman who has been trained as a hospital nurse, is a certificated midwife, and has passed through a special course of training designed to equip her with a knowledge of the preventive and public health aspects of her work.

4. After careful consideration and consultation with the Associations of Local Authorities and other bodies interested in this matter, the Minister has decided that *on and after the 1st April, 1928*, he will not approve the appointment of a woman

for the first time as a whole-time officer of a Local Authority with Health Visiting duties, unless she has obtained the Certificate mentioned in paragraph (4) of the enclosed Memorandum. It will be seen that this Certificate will be obtainable by a woman desiring employment as a Health Visitor who passes the examination referred to in that paragraph and—

- (i) Is a "trained nurse," as defined in paragraph 1 of the conditions of grant, who has obtained the Certificate of the Central Midwives Board and has completed an approved course of training in public health work, lasting for at least six months; or,
- (ii) Has undergone a course of training of two years' duration already recognised under the Board of Education (Health Visitors' Training) Regulations, 1919, together with six months' training in Hospital, and has obtained the Certificate of the Central Midwives Board.

5. It will be observed that paragraph 3 (3) of the conditions of grant requires that the practical instruction comprised in the six months' course of training in public health work shall, so far as practicable, be conducted in co-operation with the Public Health Department of the Local Authority for the area in which the course is given. The Minister trusts that the Local Authorities concerned will give all possible facilities to the training institutions in order that the students may have an opportunity of observing the ordinary duties of a Health Visitor under normal conditions.

6. It will, of course, be realised that the position of existing Health Visitors should be fully safeguarded, and in the case of such Visitors who are appointed to serve in districts other than those in which they may be engaged prior to the 1st April, 1928, the Minister will be prepared to approve their appointment without further qualifications. But he desires especially to call attention to the provision which is explained in paragraph (6) of the Memorandum for enabling a woman who has given at least five years' satisfactory service as a Health Visitor to obtain the new Certificate, and he trusts that Local Authorities will assist and encourage their Health Visitors to prepare and enter for the examination leading up to that Certificate.

7. The Minister is anxious that facilities should be provided for those who are already engaged in Health Visiting to obtain occasional "Refresher" courses, and he is prepared to approve the payment by Local Authorities of the reasonable expenses of their Health Visitors (including fees, maintenance and travelling expenses) in attending whole-time courses lasting from two to four weeks and designed with a view to extending both their practical and theoretical knowledge. It is hoped that such courses will be organised in London and other large centres by bodies familiar with the kind of instruction required and having special facilities for obtaining suitable lecturers. The expenditure incurred by Local Authorities in connection with courses



of this kind, which have been arranged with the Minister's approval, will be eligible for grant under the Maternity and Child Welfare Regulations. In addition, Local Authorities may themselves organise series of lectures and short part-time courses of instruction for their Health Visitors, and the reasonable expenditure incurred in respect of approved courses of this nature will be eligible for grant under the Maternity and Child Welfare Regulations.

8. In a large number of Counties the District Nurses are employed as Health Visitors in rural parishes and this arrangement has many advantages, both as regards economy in travelling and the prevention of over-lapping in visiting. It is important, however, that District Nurses who undertake Health Visiting should receive suitable instruction in this part of their duties, and the courses referred to in the preceding paragraph should be particularly valuable for them. There would be no objection to a District Nurse who is to be employed as a Health Visitor taking such a course even before she began her Health Visiting work.

9. It will be observed that, under the conditions of grant, new entrants to the profession of Health Visiting will be required to devote  $3\frac{1}{2}$  or 4 years to their training for this work. This consideration will no doubt be taken into account by Local Authorities in fixing the rates of salaries of their Health Visitors, and the Minister trusts that in all cases the salaries offered will be sufficient to attract and retain qualified women who can reasonably be expected to render efficient service.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,



*Assistant Secretary.*

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Printed under the authority of HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE  
 By Wyman & Sons, Limited, Fetter Lane, London, E.C. 4.

1925.

*Price 1d. Net.*