

psychogeriatric services

Four research projects on *child abuse* are currently being funded by the DHSS, one at the Institute of Psychiatry.

For the first time for several years at least, questions were asked on 21 July relating to *psychiatric services in Northern Ireland*. About 9,000 admissions to hospitals and units occur annually, there are about 46,000 attendances at out-patient clinics and 28,000 at day hospitals. Each year there are about 350 discharges of such patients.

A total of 70 *psychosurgery* operations were performed in 1979, and 62 in 1980. Of these the great majority (47 and 50) were performed at the Brook Hospital. No information as to diagnosis was available centrally.

Mental handicap

In the debate on Disabled Persons (in connection with the International Year of Disabled People) initiated in the Commons on 3 July by Mr Alfred Morris, two speakers, Mr Jack Ashley and Mr T. Benyon referred at length to the care of the mentally handicapped. Both speakers mentioned the television film 'The Silent Minority' and commended, as an alternative to large institutions, the Spastics' Society's experimental home at Beech Hill House. Mr Ashley especially urged the total removal of all children from mental handicap hospitals, as well as the removal of many of the adults. He cited the evidence of Maureen Oswin and Ann Shearer as to the outcome where children were brought up in institutions. Mr Benyon, however, pointed out that 'Silent Minority' had distressed the hospital staffs and impeded recruitment, and he brought out the fact that each month about 35 injuries were caused to staff by patients at Borocourt. No reference to mental handicap was made in the Minister's (Mr Rossi's) necessarily brief reply to the debate.

Mr Jenkin, on 7 July, promised to make a statement on the 'Silent Minority' film as soon as possible after obtaining further information from the health authorities.

Questions relating to mental handicap were mostly of local concern, but the following answers may be of interest. The numbers of mentally handicapped persons in England in need of special services is estimated to be between 2.9 and 3.4 per thousand of the population. The number of psychologists, physiotherapists and speech therapists work-

ing in mental handicap hospitals has been rising in recent years, e.g. speech therapists are now 1 per 1,000 patients as contrasted with 1 per 3,000 ten years ago.

So few questions asked on psychiatric subjects relate to conditions in *Wales* that special mention should be made of one by Mr D. Wigley on 18 June. He referred to a recent official document 'All-Wales Plan for the Mentally Handicapped', but was told that no assumptions had been made as to the number of persons who could be discharged from hospitals.

Mentally abnormal offenders

The appointment of Dr Alfred Minto as Medical Director of Rampton Hospital was announced in May, and he has since taken up his appointment. Dr Julian Roberts, of Leeds, is to be a member of the new Review Board.

Twenty patients were transferred from Special to NHS hospitals during June, and progress is to be reviewed.

Over £44 million has been allocated since 1976 for the development of regional secure units.

Late News

Among the many written answers included in the last issue of *Hansard* before the summer recess were a few relating to mental disorder.

The consultative document 'Care in the Community' includes suggestions which may require legislation if they meet with general approval.

During 1980, there were 140 diagnoses of subnormality or severe subnormality made in prisons, and at the end of the year there were 25 persons of these groups still in prisons.

Difficulties relating to the 'means-testing' of families of mentally handicapped children in local authority care are being considered as part of a review of supplementary benefits.

Figures were given for the numbers of old people in England and Wales in certain recent years, with projections for future quinquennia. It appears that the numbers in the 60-79 groups are likely to diminish by 1995, but the number of over-80s will continue to rise steeply (1,124,000 in 1975; 1,335,000 in 1980; estimated 1,764,000 in 1995).

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Erratum

In the article on sections 60 and 65 of the Mental Health Act and the European Commission of Human Rights (*Bulletin*, August, p. 151) an error occurred on page 152. In the section 'Case of X against the United Kingdom' it should have read: 'In *unsuccessful* proceedings for a writ of habeas corpus the official reason given for the applicant's recall was that his "condition was giving cause for concern".'