

Review

Psychological Medicine Monograph Supplement 2: Long-term community care: Experience in a London borough. Edited by J. K. Wing. Cambridge University Press. 1982. 97pp. £8.

This is the latest from Camberwell in its cycle of innovation, evaluation, further planning and re-evaluation. This programme began in 1964 with the setting up of the Case Register in preparation for the courageous adoption by the Maudsley in 1967 of partial responsibility for a local catchment area. The first round of evaluation was completed in 1971 (Wing and Hailey, 1972) and contained various recommendations which were adopted. Further evaluation of two parts of the service for the chronically ill is presented in the volume under review.

Part 1 is a survey of 158 users, aged 18 or more, of Camberwell's day or residential care services who had been in contact for a year or more but were not long-stay inpatients. Those in hostels and group homes had in fact been there on average for nearly five years, and three-quarters of the whole sample had first contacted psychiatric services more than ten years previously. All were chronically disabled, half of them by schizophrenia, and from the severity of their carefully described disabilities one can well believe that elsewhere few of them might ever have been considered dischargeable from hospital. What made this possible in Camberwell was, of course, the development in previous years of a rich variety of community facilities. The number of day centre and workshop places available was not far short of the *Better Services* guideline of 60 per 100,000 and the number of places in non-hospital residential accommodation was 123 per cent of the guideline of 30 per 100,000. The authors give excellent descriptions of the patients, of the practices of the units in which they lived or worked, and of the problems and generally favourable reactions of their relatives (less than half of the patients still possessed caring and supportive relatives).

Part 2 is a description of the 14-bed hostel-ward for new long-stay patients at No 111 Denmark Hill and an evaluation of its performance in the three years since it opened in 1977. Few will doubt that the patients have benefited from the carefully designed social setting and the highly skilled care they have received, but the numbers are too small and

the turnover necessarily too slow to have allowed scientific proof of this.

This independent survey has put Camberwell's services for the mentally disabled under a veritable microscope. No HAS inspection ever probed as deep as this. The fact that so little criticism and so comparatively few shortcomings emerge is a tribute to the excellence of the services and the calibre of those who have developed and staffed them. Such gaps as were identified in provision of the particular services needed by certain patients or their relatives were thought to be due to the inherent difficulty of running a *community* service, which by its very nature is liable to be administratively fragmented.

The important question raised by this well-written report is the extent to which the services described can provide a model to be copied elsewhere with an expectation of obtaining similar findings. As the editor and the three women authors (C. Creer, Social Worker; E. Sturt, Statistician; and T. Wykes, Psychologist) repeatedly point out, this cannot be judged from one study but has to depend on similar evaluative research in other districts, which is the only way to accumulate such knowledge. To produce comparable results a similar suburban District would need first-class professional talent, very good community facilities and probably more money (because the hostel-ward costs some three times as much as a comparable ward at Cane Hill). A District with a more thinly spread population might find other problems too.

Some may doubt whether the model of services as described is capable of transfer to their patch. No one can be left in doubt that the principle of evaluation as applied in this monograph is a good thing. The people who actually do the work of caring for Camberwell's patients are to be congratulated on their courage in exposing their performance to so searching an audit.

ROGER MORGAN

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REFERENCE

- WING, J. K. & HAILEY, A. M. (1972) *Evaluating a Community Psychiatric Service: The Camberwell Register 1964-1971*. Oxford University Press.