

Le Play House Chester Civic Survey

Le Play House opened at 65 Belgrave Road, Westminster, in April 1920 to provide offices for Sociological Society. Start of Regional Survey Movement in UK, to foster its application to education, town planning, social work and general 'civic betterment'.

Extract from Report on Social Services in Cheshire by Alexander Farquarson, 1927

Sub-Chapter D. General Welfare Organisations

Section 69i: Introductory

607a. The idea of General Social Welfare, and the sense of a need for some form of organisation which will keep this in view, has not yet been generally accepted. Much greater progress has, however, been made in the West than in the East of the County. It seems fair to suggest that this is largely due to the influence of Liverpool, with its well developed council of Voluntary Aid, and Personal Service, and its School of Social Studies. Things have moved more slowly in Manchester, and it is, no doubt, the absence of active influence from Manchester during the past few years that has hindered progress in the East.

608a. In the West, Chester C. S. W., the new Neston C. S. W, Birkenhead C. O. S. and Wallasey C. S. W. and Guild of Help, form a chain of centres, which could probably, in co-operation with one another, deal with certain departments of work throughout Western Cheshire. It is not, of course, meant to suggest that such a development should be undertaken, without full consideration and agreement with the statutory authorities.

609a. It should be noted that the Liverpool Personal Service Association receives, and deals with, many cases from the Wirral area of Cheshire. Discussion is at present proceeding as to co-ordination of this work with the work of the Birkenhead C. O. S., and other bodies in West Cheshire; but it is too early to suggest what the result of this may be.

610a. In what follows the older Societies for General Welfare are first dealt with, and later the Councils of Social Welfare proper. It will be noted that Personal Service (or Case Work) still absorbs most of the attention of these bodies. The Chester C. S. W. is the only good example to the contrary.

Section 69k. Charity Organisation Societies

611a. CHESTER C. O. S. This Society existed before the organisation of the Council of Social Welfare in Chester. All the work of the Society has now been taken over by the Council of Social Welfare, but the funds are still kept separate, and a skeleton Organisation is maintained. The C. S. W. receives an annual grant of £20 for the work of administration. The chief activity is the management of a number of pensions. The recipients of these are aided occasionally by gifts of blankets and provisions at Christmas, etc. The work is on quite a small scale, the whole budget being about £200 yearly.

612a. BIRKENHEAD C. O. S. This is an old established Society: the work is now in the hands of an Honorary Secretary, and a paid Agent and his wife. Case work of the usual type

is carried on, many convalescent cases being dealt with. Clothing is given away to many cases. There is a Poor Man's Lawyer, dealing with over 600 cases yearly. Some loans are made, and there are about 50 pensioners. A Provident Society, worked by collectors, is run in association; the deposits and withdrawals amount to over £1,000 yearly. Apart from this, the income of the Society is about £1,300 yearly. £250 of this spent on administration, and the rest on the relief of cases.

Section 69l. Guilds of Help.

613a. WALLASEY GUILD OF HELP. This is an old-established Guild; it is run by an Honorary Secretary, who is one of the officials at the Town Hall. Its chief activity is administering pensions for the Mercantile Marine Association; the sum thus dealt with is about £770 yearly. In addition about £100 is spent yearly on food for needy cases. Administration expenses are very small. There is a small reserve fund, which is now being drawn upon, as there is an annual deficit. It is said that the number of voluntary workers in connection with the Guild has much decreased.

Section 69m. Relief Societies

614a. MACCLESFIELD RELIEF SOCIETY. This Society has been closed down for several years, and no information is available as to whether any revival is attempted.

615a. Altrincham & Bowden Relief Society, is concerned with relief and provident work in its area, apparently on a small scale.

Section 69n. Council of Social Welfare

616a. Wallasey Council of Social Welfare. This Council was started about sixteen months ago on the initiative of one of the local ministers. The interest and support of the Town Council was obtained, and a small grant was made by the Town Council towards expenses. A paid Secretary was engaged, and case work was undertaken for a few months. As fresh funds were not available, the paid Secretary resigned about six months ago, and since then the Council has been inactive.

617a. Northwich Council of Social Welfare. This Council, which deals with Northwich and the surrounding area, is largely dependent on the support of Messrs. Brunner Mond's Works. It is chiefly engaged in relief work. Many cases are dealt with, but apparently on a small scale of relief. There is a paid Secretary.

618a. Warrington Council of Social Welfare takes as its area not only Warrington County Borough, but also a number of adjoining parishes, including the Cheshire parishes to the South. The Council does case work on the ordinary lines, and makes a special point of assisting visiting theatrical and music hall companies in obtaining accommodation, and in other ways. The Council has also assisted with National Savings work its district. The cost of administration is over £400 yearly, about £300 of which is contributed by subscribers. There is a large clothing fund, from which assistance is given to many applicants, and moneys are administered on behalf of other organisations.

619a. Neston and Parkgate Council of Social Welfare. This Council has been formed quite recently. After careful discussion, a thoroughly representative body of supporters has been got together, and a gift of £1,000 has been made towards the cost of commencing work. The

Council proposes to undertake case work on the usual lines, and also to interest itself specially in the problem of juvenile employment in its area, which, with other parts of the Wirral, is the feeder for Port Sunlight Works. It is too early yet to give any account of the results achieved by the Council. Generally speaking, however, it seems assured of full support in its area.

620a. Chester Council of Social Welfare. The Chester C. S. W. is organised on the usual lines, with full representation of statutory and voluntary bodies. It is able to employ a full time Secretary and clerk, as well as many voluntary workers. While it is mainly concerned with the City area, a large number of cases requiring advice or help are referred to it from the rural area round, and from other towns in the West of the County, and as a general rule such cases are dealt with.

621a. The city is divided into districts for relief purposes, and relief cases are dealt with by District Committees. Over 600 such cases were dealt with last year, much relief being given by way of loan, and loans of over £600 were repaid during the year. The Citizens Friend Department deals with cases when advice is required. 550 such cases were dealt with last year. In a number of these, assistance was given by the Council's Hon. Solicitor.

623a. The C. S. W. co-operates closely with the City Council over Educational Committee cases, and Maternity and Child Welfare Cases. Where defective children are in special institutions, the C. S. W. assists in assessing the contributions to be paid by patients. It investigates special difficulties in regard to school attendance. It assesses parents' contributions for medical services etc., and cases where maintenance allowances are desired for educational purposes. It also investigates cases of premature assistance in the after-care of Tuberculous cases. It helps in looking after M. D. children and assists with apparatus for crippled children. A grant is made to the Council by the City in respect of this work.

624a. The C. S. W. also co-operates actively with other organisations. The Chester Rotary Club assists in certain employment cases, and has helped greatly with the housing scheme. The Council is responsible for the Secretarial work in connection with the Federation of Boys' and Girls' Clubs, and for the Juvenile Organisations Committee.

Comments of B E Astbury, Secretary of Chester CoSW, in response

I think the NCSS report proves the almost impossibility of establishing a Rural Community Council in Cheshire. The East and West have very few common interests and it is doubtful whether any scheme would contain both sections. The future policy or rather plan of attack seems to fall under two heads.

1). To secure the interest and goodwill of the Cheshire County Council and the various Borough and Urban District Councils. This can best be done by demonstration and of notifying the particular authority of help given by the nearest Council of Social Service, e.g. a number of TB cases (resident in the County Area) involving personal service work have made direct application to the Chester Council of Social Welfare. Whenever this Council have helped they have notified the County Medical Officer of Health of the action taken and he has expressed his appreciation of the help given. He now refers to the Chester Council of

Social Welfare TB cases requiring help outside the scope of the Local Authority. In the same way the Chester Federation of Boys' Clubs accept for affiliation Clubs and Organizations in Hoole and Saltney Ferry. The Director of Education for the County is aware of the fact and has already discussed a County Federation with the President of the Girls' Clubs.

2). By establishing in certain selected centres different types of Councils of Social Service at say Crewe, Stockport, a Village Council at Malpas and Tarporley. When these Councils are established they could be linked together in a County Scheme. Mr Farquarson specially mentions such a linking up of centres in West Cheshire (para 608a). A Conference is shortly to be held of all the agencies mentioned in this paragraph of the report.

It will be the first practical work arising out of the Survey and with care should result in a great step forward, inasmuch as the whole of the Wirral Peninsula will then be covered. The main test will be whether the group can cover such places as Ellesmere Port, Bromborough &c. The great problem confronting the establishment of new Local or Village Councils will undoubtedly be finance. It is practically certain that Local Authorities will not provide the necessary funds. The work must be established by voluntary effort, and prove its usefulness by attracting the attention and interest of the Statutory Authorities. To obtain voluntary financial support will be more difficult than would appear from the report. The Boroughs in the County can almost without exception be grouped as non Residential. People who make their money in Stockport, Crewe and Ellesmere Port do not live in these areas. (By this I mean Works owners and the professional classes), and it is extremely doubtful whether they will provide either the necessary personal service or money. To obtain block grants from large firms has proved an unsatisfactory arrangement in at least two cases, the most noteworthy being Northwich, where a Council of Social Service was formed and financed entirely by Brunner Monds. It has in less than two years become a Works Relief Agency and its days are already numbered. Specialist case work from Northwich is being increasingly referred to Chester.

Another alternative may be an extension of the works payments on the lines of Hospital Saturday Committees. Crewe Hospital is almost entirely financed by such a collection. Before such a scheme could be launched with success an enormous amount of propaganda work would have to be done and the report is full of information as to the best channels for such work. The Women's Institutes, Women's Co-operative Guilds, Workers' Educational Association Centres and Factory Welfare Centres suggest themselves as fruitful fields for intensive propaganda work.

A final alternative is that the Carnegie Trust may in view of the special difficulties the County presents, vary their procedure and instead of making a grant for County Organization, make a contribution towards the establishment of Urban and Village Councils in selected parts of the County.

A further point the Committee might consider would be the advisability of approaching existing Local Councils of Social Service and ask them to carry out a limited amount of missionary work, such as dispensaries for case work in outlying villages. Chester could be asked to open a centre one day a week say at Malpas, Ellesmere Port and Tarvin. A competent Voluntary worker could doubtless be found in each centre and the executive work could be carried out by the Chester Council of Social Welfare. Similarly Manchester could break new ground in East Cheshire and Neston in Wirral. To sum up, little if anything can be

done without the goodwill and interest of the Cheshire County Council and the various Local Authorities. From the report it is obvious that this fact is uppermost in the mind of Mr Farquarson. One feels too he recognises that to secure this goodwill and interest will be no easy task. It will possibly take years and I am convinced it will come spasmodically, therefore the only possibility is to concentrate on centres where this goodwill is assured, and finally to link up the whole in one great County Scheme.

I do not think the report sufficiently emphasises the 'pull' on Chester Social Services made by the Deeside group of towns – Sandycroft to Flint. This group may for special service purposes be described as 'Nobody' children'. The tendency to tilt them over the border and foist them upon the Voluntary Agencies in Cheshire is becoming more marked each year. Certain agencies are apt to encourage this (e.g. the Chester Royal Infirmary) because of the revenue received from workmen's contributions. Other Chester Agencies have already refused to deal with case work from Flintshire. I think this group of towns should come into the picture more than they do. They will certainly be an important factor in any attempt to organise Social Services in Cheshire.