

237 were placed out at board, in situations, or with friends on probation, either on admission or after a short period of residence at an industrial school.

Co-operation of Organizations dealing with Child-welfare.

Considerable advancement has been made in the linking-up of the various organizations dealing with child-welfare. The infant-life protection system, through its District Agents and visiting nurses, caters for the child under six years who is maintained apart from its parents or guardians.

The medical examination of school-children brings many cases under the notice of the Department suitable for instruction at special schools (deaf, blind, or mentally backward), while the personal visits of the school nurses to the homes of children requiring medical treatment have been the means of disclosing many cases calling for the supervision of the Department's social workers. For dealing with the truant-player and the child who, by his lack of progress at school, or by his demeanour or appearance, suggests either indifferent treatment in his home or want of proper parental control, the teacher, Attendance Officer, and Juvenile Probation Officer are all in co-operation with each other.

The Department has under consideration proposals for extending this important branch of social service.

INFANT-LIFE PROTECTION.

The purpose of this system is to provide supervision and protection for infants boarded out by their parents or guardians in circumstances that might lead to their neglect or ill treatment. Unless licensed as a foster-parent, no person in consideration of any payment or reward may receive or take charge of an infant for the purpose of nursing or maintaining it apart from its parents or guardians for longer than seven consecutive days. "Infant" means a child under six years of age. Besides the district agents, duly appointed officers who are qualified nurses have full power to inspect the licensed homes. If necessary the Education Department may take over the maintenance of a child, recovering the cost from the parents or guardians, and the foster-parent's license may be revoked, the children in the home being otherwise provided for as the Minister may direct. Payment of a premium on the adoption of a child brings the case within the provisions of the Act.

The number of homes licensed at the end of the year was 940, and the total number of children in them during the year was 1,361, an increase of 111 for the year. Of this total the number of infants under one year was 386; 12 children died, being 0·88 per cent. of those in the homes. Of that number nine died in foster-homes and three in hospitals or nursing homes to which they had been removed for treatment, so that the deaths in foster-homes represented 0·66 per cent. only of the total number dealt with.

The expenditure in connection with infant-life protection for the year ended 31st March, 1918, was £1,219; for the preceding year the amount was £1,350.

SUMMARY SHOWING COMPARATIVE COST OF UPKEEP AT SPECIAL SCHOOLS, 1916 AND 1917.

School.	Number of Pupils maintained.		Net Maintenance Expenditure.		Average Annual Cost per Head.	
	1916.	1917.	1916.	1917.	1916.	1917.
			£	£	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
School for Deaf, Summer ..	112	109	4,277	3,393	38 3 9	31 2 7
Special School for Boys, Otekaike ..	64	95	4,902	5,608	76 11 0	59 0 0
Special School for Girls, Richmond ..	..	48	..	1,756	..	36 11 8

It will be seen from the above figures that, notwithstanding the increased cost of living and the conditions arising out of the war, the average cost of maintenance has not increased.