

ADDENBROOKE'S HOSPITAL

SOCIAL WORKER IN DRUG DEPENDENCY

The city of Cambridge contains a very high density of young people. This is primarily due to the concentration of institutions of further education in or near the city. In addition, its reputation attracts young people from abroad and also, as it is the largest town in the area, many young people come to the city to enjoy themselves.

Cambridge for some time has been the principal illicit drug distributing centre for the region. Drug users tend to fall into three groups:

- (a) Students who use cannabis and L.S.D.
- (b) Psychopathic personalities who are addicted to amphetamines.
- (c) Hard drug addicts who use these substances intravenously.

The groups, of course, are not exclusive and there is an increasing tendency for drug users to employ whatever drug is currently fashionable or available on the black market. The number of regular drug users in the city is not known, but it runs into hundreds. In towns around Cambridge, there are also very active drug sub-cultures, e.g. in one small town nearby there are twenty young people who fix hard drugs regularly.

In an attempt to deal with this situation, a "Containment Unit" was established at the Psychiatric Out-Patient Department at Addenbrooke's Hospital in the Spring of 1968. This Clinic caters for addicts who are dependent on opiates. It is staffed by a group of general practitioners - clinical assistants in psychiatry, who care for these young people together with psychiatric consultant advisors. In addition, there are regular meetings held between psychiatrists, general practitioners, police, probation officers, social workers, chemists, youth leaders and nurses, to formulate policies and to feed back the information that is necessary for the control of drug misuse. There is a smaller group of doctors who meet with a consultant psychiatrist to consider the dynamics of drug abuse. It is probable that the social worker would participate in this group.

It is anticipated that the social worker will play a key role in the functions of the Containment Unit, as he or she will have an overall picture of the drug scene, something which is difficult for other team members, excluding of course, the police.

There is a very active Association for the Prevention of Addiction in the city, which sponsors meetings for the parents of young people who take drugs. Individual members of the Association have also been most helpful to many of these young people in trouble, and have played an

important role in drawing public attention to the needs of young people dependent on drugs. There is also an intensive research programme on drug dependency in Cambridge being carried out by the Maudesley Hospital Institute. The Maudesley research team have a centre in the city which is used in a very informal and relaxed way by drug users, and it is likely that the social worker in drug dependency would wish to be associated with some of the work that is carried out there. Some group work for the addicts is provided, and serves as a 'psychotherapeutic' support for those addicts who wish to attend.

These programmes serve the hard drug takers, that is those who use heroin, morphine and pethidine. There is, in addition, a large sub-culture, often highly delinquent, which uses and is dependent upon, amphetamines. A number of interesting attempts are being made in close collaboration with police and probation services to work with this group, and there is room for initiative by the social worker who is appointed. A considerable and complex drug culture exists in towns around Cambridge. In two of these an attempt is being made to organise a community programme to contain the misuse of drugs in these towns. General practitioners, youth leaders, police, probation officers, educationalists, clergy and others are now beginning to work closely together to contain the situation. Here again, it is hoped that the social worker will be able to join the team efforts and play an important part, especially in helping the families of the young people involved. It has been found that one of the most useful therapeutic processes is the treatment of the family as a whole, and this again provides challenging and interesting opportunities in both research in the family dynamics, and for psychotherapeutic intervention. It is planned that the social worker will have an opportunity for supervision from a consultant psychotherapist who is working with drug dependent young people.