

SAORSTAT EIREANN.

# REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSION ON THE RELIEF

OF THE

SICK AND DESTITUTE POOR,

INCLUDING THE INSANE POOR.

BAILE ATHA CLIATH.

DUBLIN.

FOILLSITHE AG OIFIG AN tSOLATHAIR.

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COMMISSION ON THE RELIEF OF THE SICK AND  
DESTITUTE POOR.

(Appointed on the 19th March, 1925.)

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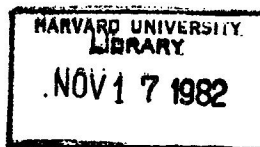
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towns, we would suggest that the natural location for such institutions would be in proximity to the larger County Homes. In Dublin an institution of this character has been established on good lines at Pelletstown, which was formerly the school of the South Dublin Workhouse. Another institution on much the same lines has been established at Kilrush, in County Clare, and we do not suggest that it should be discontinued. It is impossible for us to indicate more precisely where institutions of this character could be most conveniently situated as the matter must, unless each Board of Health sets up its own institution, be one of negotiation between groups of counties, subject, of course, to final approval by the Minister.

233. We consider it very desirable that attached to such institutions as may be set up there should be a probationary department and a maternity department. Both these are necessary in order to keep the unmarried mothers in the pre-natal period out of contact with the County Homes.

234. At present there is no power to detain a woman in any Poor Law institution, even when it is clearly necessary for her protection. We suggest that if an unmarried woman who applies for relief during pregnancy or after giving birth to a child is willing, when applying for assistance, to undertake to remain for a period not exceeding one year there should be power to retain her for that period, in the case of a first admission. In the case of admission for a second time, there should be power to retain for a period of two years. On third or subsequent admissions the Board should have power to retain for such period as they think fit, having considered the recommendation of the Superior or Matron of the Home. All cases whose maximum period of residence is indeterminate should be reviewed annually.

235. There is in each County Home a good deal of work, such as is done by wardmaids, that would afford useful employment for some of the women who would be received into the special institutions. We would see no objection to such women as the Matron considers suitable being transferred to the County Home for the purpose of assisting in the work of cleaning, etc.

236. The term of detention we recommend is not an irreducible period and is not intended to be in any sense penal. It is primarily for the benefit of the woman and her child, and its duration will depend entirely on the individual necessities of each case. We are not in favour of the rigid application of fixed periods of detention; those we have mentioned are maximum periods within which the widest discretionary power should be exercised. The object of our recommendations is to regulate control according to individual requirements, or in the more degraded cases to segregate those who have become sources of evil, danger, and expense to the community.

237. The Board of Health would, we anticipate, normally act on the advice of the Superior or Matron of each institution with regard to discharges and also with regard to the future arrangements for the child.

On the question of discharge, we have come to the conclusion that no woman should be discharged until she has satisfied the Board of Health that she will be able to provide for her child or children, either by way of paying wholly or partially for maintenance in the Home or boarding it out with respectable people approved by the Board of Health. Discretion might, however, be left to the Board of Health to allow the woman to take her discharge without taking her child or children, if they consider this desirable from the circumstances of the particular case.

It should be the duty of Superiors and Matrons to endeavour to place those fit for discharge in suitable positions outside and to see that they will not be altogether without supervision.

238. In Homes where there are infant children there should be a kindergarten or infant school.

#### *Children.*

239. The suggestion that we have made that children under school age whom it is not possible to board out should be accommodated in the Homes provided for unmarried mothers, cannot be taken as catering for the entire number of children for whom institutional accommodation may be required.

On the 31st March, 1925, the number of children in receipt of relief in County Homes and Dublin Workhouse is returned as 1,582, the number boarded out as 1,907, and the number in extern institutions as 768, or a total of 4,257.

240. The classes of children formerly met with in the workhouses were orphan, and deserted children; legitimate and illegitimate children of workhouse inmates, including the children of widows with only one child; children, other than orphan