

245

LONDON BOROUGH OF LAMBETH

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE

Childrens COMMITTEE  
8<sup>th</sup> April 19 68

RECRUITMENT ADVERTISING: CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT

1. The Committee, at its last meeting, asked for information about the response to advertisements for staff in the Children's Department and it is hoped that the following will be helpful.

2. The vacancies fall into three main groups - firstly, head office and social worker staff; secondly, supervisory residential staff; and thirdly the general recruitment level of housemothers.

(a) Head Office and Social Worker Staff

3. During the past 3 years, very few advertisements have been necessary for head office staff. Administrative and clerical vacancies in the Department have been filled mainly by promotion from applicants within the Council's service, and the occasional advertisement in the local press for a clerk or a shorthand typist has had a good response at small cost.

4. Posts of child care officer and senior child care officer have not been filled so easily. Though advertisements have been well-placed in carefully selected magazines, such as Child Care News, Case Conference, and New Society, but there has never been a really good response. A number of times advertisements have been placed in newspapers such as the Daily Telegraph, the Observer and the Guardian. The response from these media has sometimes been discouraging in view of the comparatively high costs, but in general it is no poorer than in the 'child care' magazines, where one might reasonably expect applicants to look. An example of this is the post of Senior Child Care Officer, advertised in April, 1967, in the Observer, the Daily Telegraph, New Society, Child in Care, Case Conference, Opportunities and the Guardian. Of these, the Guardian and New Society produced 3 replies each, the Daily Telegraph and the Observer 2 replies each and Opportunities 1 reply. Child in Care and Case Conference both brought a negative response.

5. The problem that the Council is faced with when advertising for social worker staff, is of attracting applications from a very small market of qualified people. Although at the time following reorganisation, it was necessary to advertise widely to fill up the establishment, the majority of applicants now come by personal approach or due to close contacts developed with universities and colleges running social work and specific child care courses, primarily through participation in the practical training of students on these courses. As a result of this there are sufficient applicants to fill most basic grade vacancies.

(b) Supervisory Residential Staff

6. There has been a very poor response over the past three years to advertisements for supervisory staff. Although the display style has been varied to make our advertisements appear as attractive as possible, and a wide range of media used, the results have not been encouraging.

7. For example, in January, 1966, a special edition of the Daily Sketch featuring careers in residential child care was used to advertise our outstanding vacancies, but the resulting response was negligible. The posts of Deputy Warden at the girls' hostels were given a really excellent display in the Journal of Residential Child Care and the British Hospital Journal but with no response from either.



LONDON BOROUGH OF LAMBETH

8. The advertisement for Matron at Shirley Oaks in June 1967 covered a very wide field of media, including New Society, British Hospital Journal, Opportunities, Child in Care, the Daily Telegraph and the Institutional Management Journal, with only ten replies as a result and yet it was not possible to make an appointment. For the post of Deputy Warden, Almond House, which appeared in September, 1967, in the British Hospital Journal, the Child in Care, Opportunities, New Society and the Daily Telegraph, only one application was received - from a reader of the Daily Telegraph. This post was advertised again in February of this year in the British Hospital Journal and the Child in Care, with no response.

9. The whole problem of filling residential supervisory posts can be said to be that of 'supply and demand' - there are too many local authorities competing for too few applicants. One has only to look in 'The Child in Care' Magazine to see the number of advertisements for residential staff. This is the reason why there is little response from the more obvious advertising media, such as Child in Care, Case Conference and Approved School Gazette. Indeed, it is more usual to get better response from the "quality" newspapers and New Society. To give only one example of this, when the post of Residential Training Officer was advertised in October, 1967, for which the applicants were required to have both recognised qualifications and practical experience, there were five replies from the Observer and two from New Society, but none from either the Child in Care or Case Conference. Even so it has still not been possible to make an appointment.

(c) Housemother Level

10. There are very similar problems in recruiting at housemother level - to take one copy of 'Child in Care' at random, 34 different authorities were advertising for housemothers and assistant housemothers. Another factor is that people looking for residential posts at the lower level do not necessarily look in 'Child Care' magazines, and possibly it is better to advertise at this level in local and national newspapers.

11. There was a very good response from one of our advertisements on Training for Housemothers in November, 1965. This advertisement was aimed at simplicity - applicants completed a form asking for further details, and the media used were the Daily Mirror (399 replies), the Catholic Herald (15 replies), the Church Times (14), the Evening News (59) and the Methodist Recorder (8). The initial result was very good from the Mirror, but at a very high cost (£420). Girls interested in this kind of work are not necessarily academic, perhaps being more practical, and this would account for a high percentage of readership of the Mirror. Although there were 495 replies in all, the number of appointments was just over 30, of whom 18 came from the Daily Mirror.

12. The appeal of headings in our display advertisements has been varied and two examples of this were in May and June, 1966. In May for Nursery Assistants at Thornwick Nursery, Eastbourne, the heading 'Work by the Sea' was used. The idea behind this was relevant and striking but there is a danger in the presentation of a too commercialised appeal when advertising for this type of position. In June the heading 'Our Children need you as a Housemother' was used for housemother vacancies. This was designed to present a challenge to those seeking a vocation in this type of work. This advertisement was a success and it is interesting to note that on this occasion the majority of replies came from 'The Lady' (66 replies) and from North of England and Midlands newspapers (78 replies) but there was again a poor response from the 'child care' magazines.

13. Following this success, in November, 1966, and April, 1967, a recruitment campaign for trainee housemothers was aimed at areas having a high female population with little choice of employment. There was a very good response, but it has been a problem to retain those selected, due partly to the attractions of higher wages in other spheres of employment once these girls come to London.

14. There was also a good response when the post of part-time, non-resident housemother was advertised and we may well compare this with our poor results when advertising for full-time resident housemothers. Clearly, part-time, non-resident work will attract numbers of women with domestic ties who could not otherwise consider this work.



LONDON BOROUGH OF LAMBETH

Conclusions

15. The main problem then is in the recruitment of residential staff. Only a limited number of people are attracted to the residential child care service due to the 'ties' of this kind of work, particularly on one's private life. Many of our young recruits become discouraged with the restrictions imposed on them in this work and go into commerce. The question of hours of work and relief staff is being examined by the Children's Officer and myself at the present time.

16. The Committee will remember that the Council adopted its recommendations to improve the salaries and working conditions of residential staff in the Children's Department and the implementation of these recommendations is now under way, although, of course, some of them are of a long-term nature requiring gradual change.

17. While it is anticipated that these changes will of themselves ultimately improve recruitment and reduce staff-turnover, in the meanwhile it is hoped that the present publicity campaign emphasising the 'new deal' will show positive results. Based on the experience gained throughout the period outlined in this report, a series of more direct advertisements aimed at specific groups of people is being placed in selected media and combined with an introductory folder of photographs and other publicity material. In this way it is hoped to attract mainly people who have not thought seriously about this sort of work before and I will be reporting to the Committee on the success of this campaign in due course.

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