

# THE STATE OF MARRIAGE COUNSELLING AND FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION IN ENGLAND IN 1957

by

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Drinking, gambling, and carrying a gun are subject in England to licencing regulations which lay down specifically the time and place where these activities are permitted. The marriage ceremony is similarly controlled, but safeguards against one individual injuring another through an illegal marriage are archaic compared with those surrounding drinking, gambling, or carrying a gun. They rest upon the public announcement in church or registry office of intention to marry, a form of community control effective only in a small and static village society.

Although English lawyers have modified the statute law to take account of the new social equality of women,<sup>1</sup> there is still a tendency to regard the husband as the head of the household, responsible for all that happens within. The parallel attitude that the family hearth and house are sacred is slowly changing in the official mind, but intervention within the family by officials is still a difficult point in law, and Parliament is especially aware of the risks involved if social workers in the service of the state or of the local authorities are given a legal right of entry to the houses of the country. Sensitiveness on this point hinders a preventive approach to marriage failures since social work with adults can only be organised as a voluntary activity.

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1) **A. Denning**, *The Equality of Women* (London: 1950) Lord Justice Denning's own judgement (*Dunn vs. Dunn*, 1949) ended the last dictatorial power of the English husband, the right to decide arbitrarily where the matrimonial home shall be.

The number of divorces was not a serious social problem until after the Herbert Act (1937) and did not really impinge on the public conscience until the end of World War II.<sup>2</sup> Separations were concealed by the fragmentation of statistics which appear in six separate Government publications and are entered under such headings as maintenance orders, changes of name, and applications to the National Assistance Board.<sup>3</sup> During the war years the National Registration scheme and the "Food Office divorce" led to some awareness of the rate of marriage breakdown. The post-war increase in divorce applications led to the first official enquiry which endorsed the need for marriage guidance and education in family living. This, the Denning Report,<sup>4</sup> was followed by a departmental committee which recommended specific action.<sup>5</sup>

In the light of this the Home Secretary set up in 1949 a Marriage Guidance Training Board. Official interest in marriage guidance, as will be seen, is very much starved of funds compared with the costs of broken homes and of the subsidies paid for legal aid in divorce proceedings.

2) The annual divorce total 4,000 in 1936, rose above 25,000 in 1945 and has not yet fallen below that figure.

Divorces made absolute	
1926-30	16,789
1931-35	20,056
1936-40	30,903
1941-45	51,944
1946-50	139,507
1951-55	147,858

Source: The Registrar General's  
Statistical Review for the year 1955.  
(London: H.M.S.O., 1957) p. 80

3) Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce, Minutes of Evidence 1953, pp. 411-412, Evidence of Lady Chatterjee.

4) Report of the Committee on Matrimonial Causes, Cmd (Command Paper) 7024, 1947.

5) Report of the Departmental Committee on Grants for the Development of Marriage Guidance. (The Harris Committee) Cmd 7566, 1948.



## PART I. MARRIAGE COUNSELLING

## A. OFFICIAL MARRIAGE GUIDANCE

## 1. The probation service.

Probation began spontaneously in the first part of the 19th century in England and in Massachusetts. By 1841 Matthew Davenport Hill, a Birmingham magistrate, had instituted a register of persons who helped the courts by acting as guides to young offenders; his police were asked to enquire from time to time about the young person's conduct. In 1841, also, a Boston cobbler stood bail for a drunkard on condition that he came under his protective custody. In England acts of 1879 and 1887 permitted the Police Court Mission, which grew out of this early activity, to advise on the treatment of children, and in 1907 the Probation of Offenders Act provided for the appointment of probation officers to the magistrates courts. These courts were formerly the police courts and later called courts of summary jurisdiction.<sup>6</sup>

Probation officers are servants of the court. Their domestic reconciliation work was regarded as a private missionary endeavour until 1937.<sup>7</sup> A judgement in 1929 did, however, hold that the court was acting properly in directing the probation officer to attempt conciliation before it decides whether or not a matrimonial breach has occurred.<sup>8</sup> In the interim period from 1929 to 1937 the South Western Police Court, London, in the absence of a probation officer, set up a volunteer panel of six people, led by the vicar of the parish. In nine months this panel saw 284 cases of matrimonial difficulty and in 237 of these arranged a settlement out of court; in some reconciliation took place and in others a voluntary agreement to separate was reached.<sup>9</sup>

6) Mrs. L. Le Mesurier *A Handbook of Probation* (London : National Association of Probation Officers, 1935) pp. 19-22.

7) Summary Procedure (Domestic Proceedings) Act, 1937.

8) 24 L.G.R. 364, *Pearse vs. Pearse*, quoted from *Le Mesurier op. cit.*, p. 140.

9) *Claud Mullins Wife vs. Husband in the Courts* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1935) p. 100.

In 1938, fifteen months after the Domestic Proceedings Act, probation officers reported a great variety of approaches to matrimonial conciliation by courts in different parts of the country. Some magistrates and some clerks to the court still acted as conciliators, though the procedure recommended by the Act had been adopted by 88% of the courts in the provinces and by all in London. The first interview in matrimonial disputes was in 47% of cases with the clerk who, being a local solicitor, is available in his office. About a quarter of applicants had gone direct to the probation officer and another 20% had seen magistrate and probation officer together. The issue of a summons in connection with a separation order makes no difference to the service of conciliation. From this report it appears that few probation officers regard themselves merely as functionaries whose duty it is to assess the means of the parties in separation and affiliation disputes. Forty percent do not investigate the means of applicants in matrimonial disputes at all, leaving that to the court investigating officer.<sup>10</sup>

From 1950 to 1955 statistics prepared by the Home Office and given in Table 1 show that the Probation Service sees over 70,000 individuals each year in connection with its work of matrimonial conciliation. Most applicants come directly to the Probation officer.<sup>11</sup> The numbers referred to the service by the Courts or by Clerks to Justices has shown a slight tendency to fall in the course of this five year period. In general, however, the figures are very much the same from year to year, probably indicating simply that the 1250 English probation officers<sup>12</sup> are carrying the maximum possible case load. Of the 35,000 cases closed each year, in two thirds the couple are believed to be still living together when the case was completed.

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10) Probation (London: Nat. Assoc. of Probation Officers, 2, Hobart Place, S.W.1) vol. 3 no. 4 (Jan. 1939) pp. 60-61.

11) F.S. Jarvis Probation and Marriage Counselling Social Work (London: Family Welfare Assoc.) vol. 14 (1957) pp. 306-309.

12) Scottish probation officers may not engage in conciliation work. The R.C. on Marriage and Divorce recommended that they should but the official position is still unchanged. *Hansard*, 25 June, 1957. 572 col. 9, 10



Table 1.

Year	Matrimonial conciliation work in which both parties were seen		Other matrimonial cases in which only one party was seen or which did not involve conciliation	Total
	Cases completed during year			
	Parties believed to be living together	Other cases closed		
1950	22,400	14,847	33,763	71,010
1951	22,230	14,380	34,932	71,542
1952	23,112	14,484	38,090	75,686
1953	23,893	13,761	38,886	76,510
1954	22,492	12,973	36,484	71,949
1955	21,335	12,484	37,670	71,489

Source: Home Office, Probation Division; published with permission.

In Manchester and Salford a survey of the 118 families, which produced the 180 children who came under the care of the local authority in the first six months of 1951, found that 64 families were known to the probation service. One Manchester probation officer had 50 current matrimonial cases on his books, as well as supervising 12 youths on licence from prison or Borstal and looking after 60 probationers.<sup>13</sup>

This is a normal case load; a pamphlet by the Home Office reveals that during the war years men probation officers carried about 55 juveniles and 40 adults, while women carried 40 juveniles and 30 adults. Matrimonial cases are more numerous largely because they take up less time; one juvenile probationer on a year probation counts as one case. Men averaged about 300 conciliations a year and women 100.<sup>14</sup>

13) D.V. Donnison *The Neglected Child and the Social Services; A Study of the Work done in Manchester and Salford by Social Services of all Kinds for 118 Families Whose Children Came into Public Care.* (Manchester: Manchester U.P., 1954) pp. 63-66.

14) Home Office *A Short Survey of the London Probation Service, 1939-1944.* (London, HMSO 1946) p. 12 & p. 17.

As well as conciliation directly between the parties the probation officer in cases where reconciliation has failed is often allowed to speak for the parties in the Court. His "statement of allegations" relieves those concerned of embarrassment or even of danger of nervous collapse as they seek to tell of incidents that involve the whole personality.

Working class people in all parts of England have come to trust the Probation Officer with matrimonial troubles, and much of this work involves going out to meet a reluctant partner. It is delicate work with humble people who for lack of a proper vocabulary cannot present their problems to the world.<sup>15</sup> Many people now approach the Probation Officer who have no intention of going to Court for a separation order; in such cases an overloaded service often refers the applicant to the voluntary Marriage Guidance Centre.

Originally attached to the lower courts, the Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce recommended that a welfare officer should be attached to the Divorce Court. This service is not yet fully in operation; in London, however, a probation officer has been attached as welfare officer to the High Court for the past four years. In cases where the welfare of children is involved the Court Welfare Officer covers not only the Divorce division of the High Court but also the Chancery and Queen's Bench divisions.

Few details of the procedure used in matrimonial work by probation officers have been published. The training programme of the Home Office includes instruction in the newer 'supportive' case work approach and in psychological interpretations of human behaviour. One officer has written "I personally find that when the couple have been helped, either in separate or in joint interviews to a desire or reconciliation, it is a good thing to get them together, describe what an ideal marriage is like, and invite them to discuss how their marriage falls short of that ideal. This method gets things moving in a positive direction and avoids raking over the 'muck heap'. Sometimes in such discussion one of the partners might see

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15) Home Office The Probation Service : Its Object and Organization (London : HMSO, 1946) p. 13.



for the first time that they must give if they wish to receive. The important thing is for them to see it for themselves."<sup>16</sup>

This attitude in the service goes a long way to explain the success of the probation officer as a point of appeal in matrimonial disputes. However the Harris Committee considered that social class barriers would prevent the development of a national conciliation service based on the Probation Service and considered that alternative means should be encouraged.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. Local Authorities

Responsibility for taking care of children in their area rests firmly on the local authorities under the Children Act, 1948. In 1955 they had some 80,000 children under their care and to provide for them in foster homes and institutions cost £238 per child per year. This compares with the £36 a year which a child living at home costs the local authority.<sup>18</sup>

All local authorities engage in preventive work among families, trying to help mothers who have difficulties with their children. The Health Visitor service of the local Medical Officer of Health is staffed by nurses who visit every house where a baby is born and make sure that the parents are aware of the facilities provided by the local council for maternity and child welfare. It is an information and advice giving service rather than a therapeutic one. London County Council engaged in 1956, fifty additional Home Helps to work under direction of the Health Visitors in the houses of mothers who require assistance and teaching in housecraft.<sup>19</sup> Home Helps are houseworkers employed by the local council to provide an emergency housekeeping service where father or mother is suddenly away, or for old people living alone who cannot be taken immediately to hospital if they fall sick.

16) C. H. Stanley *The Probation Officer and Conciliation*, Probation, Vol. 8 (Mar. 1956) p. 6.

17) Cmd 7566, p. 7.

18) *Maternal and Child Welfare Survey, First Quarter, 1955*, p. 11 (London: Nat. Assoc. for Maternal and Child Welfare).

19) *Maternal and Child Welfare Survey, First Quarter, 1956*, p. 10.

This London experimental service is obviously an offshoot of the hygiene and health movement, adapted slightly to the techniques evolved by the voluntary Family Service Units for rehabilitation of the unhappy group of families called 'problem families'.<sup>20</sup>

Manchester alone among the local authorities has set up a municipal counselling service. Its Family Welfare Service began in 1948 "(a) to deal with adolescent problems and difficulties (b) to strengthen the ideas of the responsibilities of the home by seeking to prevent the breakup of marriage and the alienation of children from their parents and (c) to promote the adjustment of unhappy and childless marriages."<sup>21</sup>

This service comes under the Medical Officer of Health and appears to have grown out of the Maternity and Child Guidance centers since it deals with adolescent problems as well as marital ones. It is seen by the Corporation as 'a preventive and constructive agency' to catch cases in the family before they produce broken marriages or problem children for the Courts, schools or boarding-out departments.

The Family Welfare Service operates one evening and two afternoon sessions each week, staffed by a receptionist, a psychiatric social worker and two doctors trained in psychological medicine. The service has been fully occupied since it started; in the first few years cases were sent mostly from the Manchester Marriage Guidance Center, but as the service became better known, health visitors, doctors, probation officers and social workers referred cases, and members of the public came of their own accord. A feature article in the *Manchester Evening News* doubled the monthly total of callers. For the municipal year ending 31 March 1955, applicants came as follows :

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20) A. F. Philp and Noel Timms, *The Problem of the 'Problem Family'* (London : Family Service Units, 1957).

21) Manchester City Council, *Council Minutes 1955-56*, Vol. 2, p. 384. See also M. P. Hall *Social Services of Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1952) pp. 125-129.



Table 2

<i>Applicant referred by</i>	<i>Number</i>
Municipal social workers (health visitors, child guidance, etc.)	94
Voluntary Marriage Guidance Center	49
National Health Service Social Workers (almoners, rehabilitation workers, etc.)	47
Self referred	39
Doctors	37
Probation Service	36
Other social workers	18
Recommended by other applicants	14
All other sources (Clergy, etc.)	17
<i>Total</i>	<i>351</i>

Source : *Manchester Council Minutes, 1954-55, 2, p. 371.*

The age range of the applicants, shown below, suggests that the family problems dealt with are those of the early years of marriage and particularly those concerning marital relations in the child-rearing phase. Some information of the nature of the problems themselves is also given sporadically in the reports of the service

Table 3

<i>Ages</i>	<i>Number</i>
under 20	20
21 - 30	119
31 - 40	121
41 - 50	76
over 50	4
not known	11
<i>Total</i>	<i>351</i>

Source : as above

Table 4

<i>Problems</i>			
Disharmony	65	Emotional Immaturity	12
Separation	21	Enuresis	10
Sex difficulties	24	Delinquent	4
<i>Total Marital</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>Total Adolescent</i>	<i>26</i>

Source : *Manchester Council Minutes, 1949-50, 2, p. 714*

The table shows the return for 1950, the most complete given, when 80% of cases were marital. For 1955 the report of the director (Lady Gertrude Jefferson, M.R.C.S., D.P.M.) allows us to make the following points: more than half the interviews take place in the single evening session ; out of 351 persons attending, 179 were men and 172 women; 117 of the men came alone; 62 couples came together; adjustment is most successful when the couple came together. Approximately half of those attending are skilled manual workers, foremen, shop managers or school teachers and half are in the unskilled occupations.<sup>22</sup> The 1956 report says that 340 applicants for help had 1358 interviews. Although the average is four per person, a case of parents of a child attending the Child Guidance Clinic is mentioned where the father had 15 psychiatric type interviews and the mother 8, before harmony in the home was sufficiently restored that the child could live at home without the assistance of the Child Guidance Clinic. Of the problems brought to the Service in this year, more than half are classed as marital disharmony either "i) temperamental incompatibility, ii) sexual in-comptability, or iii) incompatibility due to background resulting in different attitudes towards money, discipline of children, occupation of leisure, and religion."<sup>23</sup>

This interesting municipal service has not been copied in other

22) These occupations belong to the Registrar General's Social Class, II school teachers, shop managers : III skilled manual workers and IV unskilled occupations.

Classification of Occupations, 1950 (London : HMSO, 1951).

23) Manchester Council Minutes, 1955-56, 2, pp. 385-386.



ities. If it is an outgrowth of the maternity and child guidance clinics it may have been the model for a recommendation made by the Fabian Society to the Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce that "a social welfare officer should be attached to such clinics so that they could become 'Family Guidance Clinics.'"<sup>24</sup>

#### B. VOLUNTARY MARRIAGE GUIDANCE

The cost of broken homes in England has been given as £20 million as a minimum and the sum spent on preventive services as £3 million as a maximum.

Table 5

Cost of Broken Homes		Cost of Preventive Services	
	£ mill.		£ mill.
Children in public care	15	Medical Research Council	2
Children in approved schools	3	Probation Service	0.75
Youths in Borstal	1	All Marriage Guidance	0.012
Legal Aid for Divorce	1		
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Total (max.)</b>	<b>3</b>

Source : *Maternity and Child Welfare*, Second Quarter, 1954 p. 21

All marriage guidance grants, including the £5,000 of the Marriage Guidance Training Board, were £12,000 or less than one percent of the cost to the state of Legal Aid, of which 90 % is divorce aid.<sup>25</sup>

#### 1. Marriage Guidance Centers

Following the 1937 Act which extended the grounds for divorce a group of professional men and women met in London to discuss whether anything could be done to restore a sense of sta-

24) Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce, Minutes of Evidence, 1952, p. 499 & 504 Q 4296.

25) A. J. Brayshaw *The Stability of Marriage* (London : Nat. Marriage Guidance Council 1952) p. 10.

bility to marriage and family life. With David Mace as secretary the first Marriage Guidance Center opened in London in 1942.

The model for the movement is the medical health center. Each marriage guidance center consists of a receptionist, at least two counsellors, a man and a woman, who correspond to the general practitioner in medicine, and a series of specialists, doctors, lawyers, psychiatrists, social welfare workers, or clergymen. All the counsellors are unpaid volunteers, giving part-time service.<sup>26</sup>

At the outset the function of the marriage guidance counsellor was seen to be correct diagnosis so that the client could be directed to the specialist who could help him most. Counsellors found, however, as they gained in experience that they could satisfy many applicants without using the valuable consultants and so they engaged in treatment as well as diagnosis.<sup>27</sup>

Specialists may operate from the center itself but in many instances they see people referred from the Center in their own offices. Where a course of psychiatric treatment is indicated the applicant will be advised to seek referral back to the psychiatrist through the National Health Service.

Two guiding principles are important to the movement :

- i) the client must come to the Center, and
- ii) the counsellor cannot help the marriage, unless he has seen both partners; an applicant may, of course, be helped with personal difficulties in any case.

Both these conditions limit the type of person who seeks out the Marriage Guidance Center. Partial results of an analysis of consultations in 1952 and 1953 have been released and show that more than half the applicants fall into the skilled worker, clerical worker, or school teacher group of occupations; the uns-

26) A. J. Brayshaw, 1952 *op. cit.*, p. 6. David Mace, *Marriage Counselling* (London: Churchill, 1948).

27) J. H. Wallis *Marriage Counselling Social Work* 14 (1957) pp. 300-333.



killed account for less than 25%. Refusal to cooperate on the part of one spouse prevents the marriage counsellor proceeding with about one case in every seven.<sup>28</sup>

The London Marriage Guidance Council helped 10,000 marriages in the ten years 1943-1953. The first 1000 cases, seen by 17 different counsellors, showed that 218 received psychological help, 119 medical help, 101 legal help and 23 spiritual help; the remaining 639 did not get referred to a specialist for one reason or another. Not all of these cases were marital difficulties since the work of the London Center included giving help to engaged couples as well as marriage counselling.<sup>29</sup> Reports recently published show that between 5% and 10% of the work of a local Marriage Guidance Council is pre-marital.<sup>30</sup>

Table 6

1956-57	Marital	Total Interviews	Pre-Marital	Engaged or recent married couples in Group Discussion
Birmingham	649	1533	15	44
Manchester	550	—	49	27
Merseyside	571	—	28	42
London	—	3489	—	100

Source: as footnote 30.

The 80 Marriage Guidance Centers in England and Wales are members of a federation, the National Guidance Council. In all of them remedial work occupies most time. In the three years 1949 through 1951, 22,000 couples in difficulties and 4,000 engaged couples came to the centers. Since 1952-53 the number of reme-

28) National Marriage Guidance Council, Private Communication July 1955.

29) David Mace 1948 op. cit. pp. 162-164.

30) Marriage Guidance (London: Nat. Marriage Guidance Council) Vol. 3 No. 6 (June 1957) pp. 95-96.

dial visits runs at approximately 9,000 a year, a case load as great as the 500 active volunteer counsellors can handle. First approaches are made by the husband in 37% of the cases, by the wife in 58% and in 5% the couple come together.<sup>31</sup> This pattern of approach differs from that published by the Family Welfare Service where 18% of the visits are made jointly by the couple. This difference may well be due to the different years to which the figures refer but is more likely to be due to differences in the relations between these two service agencies and the public. In the Marriage Guidance Centers when the wife comes first the husband is persuaded to come in one third of the cases; when the husband comes first the wife is persuaded to come in nearly half the cases. Twothirds of the married couples who came were living together at the time of conciliation. More than half come in the first seven years of marriage. Among clerical and professional workers discussions tended to be about sex problems and amongst unskilled workers about housing and living difficulties. When income was high infidelity tended to be a factor in the marital difficulty more often than usual.

Applicants learned of the existence of the Marriage Guidance Center principally from: i) friends, relations or other attenders; ii) press articles and direct advertisements; iii) professional people such as doctors, lawyers and clergymen; and iv) advice or information bureaux.<sup>32</sup>

The movement estimates from what applicants report on subsequent visits that for just over one third their difficulties are eased or overcome, in a further third no improvement is possible (for one half of these cases this is because the other partner will not co-operate), and in the remaining third no information is available.<sup>33</sup>

The Marriage Guidance Council has set a high standard in its work both in the selection of counsellors and in its quiet efficiency.

31) A. J. Brayshaw, *Happy Marriage Family Doctor* (London : British Medical Association) November, 1955, p. 937.

32) National Marriage Guidance Council, *Private Communication* July, 1955.

33) A. J. Brayshaw, *Family Doctor*, loc. cit.



Both the Denning and Harris committees observe, "An effective tribute to the work of the Marriage Guidance Council is the way in which the pattern has been followed by many persons and in many places."<sup>34</sup> To have achieved such an official tribute five years after the first center opened is a remarkable achievement for a voluntary organisation.

## 2. The Catholic Marriage Guidance Council

All churches are interested in the marriage relation and anxious that their clergy shall help to promote the stability of marriage. The ten principles governing the attitude of the National Marriage Guidance Council included none at variance with Christian or Jewish ethics but did permit the final decision on family limitation to rest with the husband and wife. This was not acceptable to the Roman Catholic hierarchy and in 1946 a group of Roman Catholic laymen formed the Catholic Marriage Guidance Council and set up a center in London.

Their selection of counsellors proved difficult for they had to satisfy both the laymen of the Council and a clerical committee. In practice, most counsellors were "asked to volunteer". The Catholic marriage guidance service follows very closely the model set up by the National Marriage Guidance Council and already described.<sup>35</sup> In 1957 it was reported that 14 provincial centers were in operation; the London center had dealt with more than 1,000 applicants, mostly referred by parish priests in the diocese, between 1946 and 1948.<sup>36</sup>

In preparation for marriage the Catholic Marriage Guidance Council, like the National Marriage Guidance Council, encourages discussion groups of engaged and young married couples. Such sessions are normally led by the parish priest, so that the pastoral

34) Cmd. 7024 (1947) p. 9 and Cmd. 7566 (1949) p. 9.

35) J. P. Frere, Catholic Marriage Guidance Council. *The Clergy Review* (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne) 30 (1948) pp. 299.

36) Rev. M. O'Leary, *The Catholic Church and Marriage Counseling*. *Social Work* 14 (1957) pp. 303-306. J. Christie, *Pre-marriage training*. *Month* (London: Longmans) 185 (1948) pp. 279-284.

care of the clergy is preserved intact. Each year these young family groups meet together from all the parishes in a diocese for a Family Day. One such in London was attended by 50 parents with 30 children under 12. After early Mass, the day was devoted to lectures and spiritual exercises.<sup>37</sup>

An alternative to these family discussion groups grew up in Manchester. The Church of the Holy Name began on Sunday afternoons in 1946 a course of lectures for those about to marry. Average attendance was about 20 and the syllabus was "so designed that topics of interest from the engagement to the arrival of the first baby follow each other through the year." Each session consists of

- i) a period of meditation
- ii) lecture
- iii) discussion (not confined to the preceding lecture)
- iv) tea
- v) evening benediction

Most lectures are given by a priest but for those dealing with sex instruction, child rearing, and psychology, Catholic doctors, nurses, and psychologists are called in. Food preparation and household management lectures were given by the Ministry of Food Advice Center, a wartime department now abandoned. The academic model for the course is a similar one at the Catholic Center, University of Ottawa, Canada.<sup>38</sup>

### 3. Other Churches

The Methodist church reported to the Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce that 1) many ministers attempt reconciliation, 2) many look with favour on established local Marriage Guidance Councils and 3) many ministers have had favourable experience of help from the probation service.<sup>39</sup>

37) Rev. M. O'Leary loc. cit.

38) H. Waterhouse S. J. Noviceship for marriage. The Clergy Review 30 (1948) pp. 95-100.

39) R. C. on Marriage & Divorce, Minutes of Evidence, 1952 p. 63.



The Methodist church seeks to uphold amongst its own people the Christian standard in preparation for marriage in the following ways: 1) encouraging parents to instruct their children in sex and marriage, 2) through its Christian Citizenship Department addresses to men and women, 3) through its Women's Fellowships by remedial and teaching work with unmarried mothers, and 4) through the establishment of Young Wives' Fellowships.<sup>40</sup>

A parallel report of aims and activities was given for the established Church of England by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Anglican Church welcomed in addition proposals made to attach welfare officers to the divorce courts and for education in sex and personal relations in schools and youth clubs.<sup>41</sup> The Presbyterian Church of Scotland says that of matrimonial matters brought to its ministers in Glasgow in 1950, 12% related to premarriage advice, 80% were about marital disharmony, and 8% concerned other circumstances, mostly housing.<sup>42</sup>

During the past year the Church of England Moral Welfare Council has, in co-operation with the National Marriage Guidance Council's education department, been providing residential courses in marriage and the family. The clergy who these week-long courses are specially nominated by their bishops; the object of the course is to assist them with their pastoral work.

Unfortunately only between 10% and 13% of the adult population are in contact with a church.<sup>43</sup> Although about 70% of weddings in England and Wales take place in a church this is no evidence of willingness to consult the clergy about personal problems. The churches' own figures claim less than 20% of the population as members.<sup>44</sup>

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40) *Loc. cit.*, pp. 143-146.

41) *Loc. cit.*, pp. 143-146.

42) *Loc. cit.* p. 567.

43) **B. S. Rowntree & G. R. Lavers**, *English Life and Leisure* (London : Longmans, 1951) pp. 343-345.

44) **T. Cauter & J. S. Downham**, *The Communication of Ideas* (London : Chatto and Windus, 1954) p. 48.

#### 4. Other voluntary agencies

##### a) Family Welfare Association

This case-work agency, formerly known as the Charity Organisation Society, is also engaged in marriage guidance. Their experience is that marriage difficulties are only disclosed after families have come to the agency for assistance with another more superficial problem and that marital difficulties can best be resolved by the case-workers in the course of their association with families. One office caseload showed that 90% of the families had marriage difficulties. "It is fear of being laughed at, misunderstood or criticised rather than (English) reserve that prevents people talking about their feelings, and that many are longing for a chance to share their anxiety and make good use of the opportunity when it is offered."<sup>45</sup> This more specifically psychoanalytical approach, coupled with case-workers who go visiting where necessary, differs from that of the Marriage Guidance Councils. It is available at 57 centers in England, but no statistics are released about the number of consultations.<sup>46</sup>

##### b) National Council of Social Service.

Citizens' Advice Bureaux were set up during the war to guide the general public through the maze of war-time controls over commodities and personal movement. Soon the organisation was being used as a place to bring matrimonial problems, particularly those caused by separation and wartime temptations. Similar questions are still being asked though the causes of marital difficulties have changed. In Oxford, for example, the C.A.B. answers about 2,500 questions a year and about 7% of these concern separation, divorce, legal aid for divorce, marital disharmony, and maintenance after separation or desertion.<sup>47</sup> Another reference to a provincial Citizens' Advice Bureau mentions 1,500 specifically matrimonial

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45) Florence Mitchell, *Marriage Counselling in a family casework agency*. *Social Work* 14 (1957) p. 309.

46) Cmd. 7566 (Harris Report) 1949, p. 8.



questions a year and an additional 1,000 enquiries about 'Family and Personal Problems'.<sup>48</sup>

The C.A.B. can hardly be said to do conciliation work as this is properly understood, but as an agency for the preliminary sorting out of problems which can be referred to another specialist agency, they serve a useful purpose.

c) Finally, in the same position as the C.A.B., there are the advice giving columns in newspapers and magazines. One national newspaper receives 10,000 letters a year; it has been estimated that 500,000 cases are dealt with by all advice columns and that 1.4% of the adult population write to them each year. The 10,000 letters received by the national newspaper in 1953 contained 11,656 problems classified as follows :

Table 7

Percentage of Total Problems			
Sex Life	21	Legal	4
Birth Control	18	Social Isolation	4
Personal	15	Family Life	4
Love & Courtship	11	General	3
Marriage Ceremony	8	Child Care & Welfare	0.6
Married Life	6		
Illegitimate Birth or Pregnancy	6		

Source : Footnote 50

About half concern sex life directly, but the most striking thing about this classification is the absence of enquiries about child care. Every street and every meeting of women in England,

47) Oxford C.A.B.; Personal Communication from Mrs Pickstoke.			
Year ending March 31	Total Cases	Matrimonial	% of Total
1953	2681	212	8
1954	2557	149	6
1955	2609	183	7
1956	2388	162	6
1957	2539	168	7

both middle and working class, rings with exchanges about the children. Maternity and Child Welfare Clinics are widely used and every birth is followed by an enquiry from a Health Visitor. Either the need to talk about children is satisfied or, as Koos suggests,<sup>49</sup> families have a fair idea where to take their troubles and keep problems suitable to different departments apart.

The people who consult an advice column are 90% women, most of them from Social Class III or IV.<sup>50</sup> The standard of letter writing was held to be average in 70%, below average in 22%, and above average in 8%. In those letters above average in literary quality questions about the marriage ceremony were frequent. So far as marital status is concerned the writers divide as follows:<sup>51</sup>

Table 8

	Married	Engaged	Single
Men	34%	23%	27%
Women	36%	22%	29%
Total Persons	10,000		

Source : Footnote 50

### *Conclusion to Part I*

Two institutions, one ancient and one modern, provide a marriage guidance service which is equally available in all parts of England, urban and rural. These are the church and the probation service. Unfortunately the majority of the clergy are in this respect untrained people and equally unfortunately pastoral care is not accepted by the people. Courts are not so numerous as churches but they are well distributed among the cities and towns of the

48) Case Conference (London : London School of Economics) Vol. 1, March, 1955, p. 25. This may be Hull, Yorks.

49) E. L. Koos *Families in Trouble* (New York : King's Crown Press, 1946).

50) Cyril Greenland, *Advice Column*, Case Conference Vol. 3, No. 9 (March, 1957) pp. 255-261.

51) Social Class III, e.g. foremen, skilled workers, insurance, Social Class IV, e.g. unskilled & semi-skilled (salesmen) see *Classification of Occupations*, 1950.



country. The probation officers attached to them provide a matrimonial conciliation service accessible to everyone.

In all county boroughs of England and Wales<sup>52</sup> a Citizens' Advice Bureau will be found. The Marriage Guidance Council has 80 centers or more and provides an equivalent coverage. Occasional cities have local developments; in some the Church Army, a body which runs rescue homes, may be active through the interests of its local Captain. In Bristol, for example, the Personal Service League of the Council of Social Service is known to act as a conciliation agency.

No adequate measure exists of the need for marriage guidance nor of the extent to which the provision meets the need.<sup>53</sup> Neither in the circumstance can any effective estimate be made of the success of counselling in reconciliation or in saving individuals from preventable misery in their intimate association with others. The estimate by the National Marriage Guidance Council, that one third say they have been helped, is the only information available on this point.

## PART II EDUCATION IN FAMILY LIVING

### 1. Training Marriage Guidance Counsellors

Probation officers must have had a basic training in social work before they join the service. Once selected by the Home Office they undergo a further period of three months intensive training. During this, lectures, visits, and informal discussion with serving officers deal with the ways of handling matrimonial cases.

The National Marriage Guidance Council claims that its workers are the "most carefully selected and thoroughly trained voluntary counsellors in the land."<sup>54</sup> Names of those who volun-

52) Apart from Canterbury, these are towns with a population of 50,000 or more.

53) The Harris committee says: "In view of the manifest failure of so many marriages, there can be no difference of opinion as to the value of work which brings help to those who need it, especially in the earliest stages." Cmd. 7566, p. 9.

54) A. J. Brayshaw, *The Stability of Marriage*, 1952 p. 9

teer reach the National Council and, after taking up personal recommendations, these people are invited to attend a selection conference. At the thirty hour selection conference, fifteen applicants meet five selectors; the selection team always includes experienced counsellors and a psychiatrist. Candidates take a series of pencil and paper tests and engage in leaderless discussion groups. Individual interviews with at least three of the selectors take place at intervals through this two day process. From every 100 candidates, about 60 are notified that they are suitable for training. The basic training is given at four different three day courses ; in these intensive days the marriage counsellor learns from others the applied aspects of psychology, sociology, and social work which have been found most useful in practice. Thanks to the careful selection procedure few fail to master this practical training. All who emerge embark on a probationary year at a local Marriage Guidance Center. At the end of this the National Council again assesses the counsellor and if all is well another trained and approved marriage counsellor has been born. Out of every 100 applicants about 50 reach this stage. The total national counselling strength is about 600 of whom 100 are still in training or probation and 100 are inactive or have permanently withdrawn. In spite of the rigorous selection procedure the number of applicants is so great that selection conferences cannot be arranged quickly enough to handle them. The purposes of the training are three-fold : to give skill in interviewing ; to provide instruction in the classification of marital problems so that clients can be referred to a consultant; and, above all, to make sure that laymen can recognize "the limits of their competence."<sup>55</sup>

Until December 1956 when it was dissolved, the Marriage Guidance Training Board of the Home Office supported this training programme. Their grants also supported the Catholic Marriage Guidance Council and the Family Discussion Bureau which was founded by the Family Welfare Association.

The Family Discussion Bureau was formed to train professional

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55) A. J. Brayshaw, loc. cit.



social workers in marriage counselling. In the eight years since 1949 it has developed an intensive form of training which in two years makes a fully trained case-worker sufficiently skilled to co-operate with a psychiatrist in marital work. The aim is to form a series of teams made up of caseworkers and consultant psychiatrists. These will use a Freudian frame of reference as they assist married couples to 'work through' their problems to a new level of harmony.<sup>56</sup> The Bureau is now attached to the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations.

## 2. Family Life Education in Schools

In the schools we may look for education in family living in three places 1) as part of religious instruction, 2) under the subject titles biology, health education, or sex education, and 3) under the subject parentcraft or domestic economy. In England, as in the U.S.A. education is decentralised and it is difficult to discover what is actually happening at the local level.

For Religious Instruction an Agreed Syllabus has been drafted and is widely used in both church and local authority schools. However, the choice of method, and the omission of sections if pressed for time, are left to the Headmaster. London and Cambridge schools omit all references to family life in this syllabus. Lancashire County Council schools include the teaching of Christ on the family and ethical instruction in morality for everyday life. Pupils aged 10 in Surrey hear about the wedding feast at Cana as "His plainly setting His seal upon marriage". The West Riding of Yorkshire as well as Lancashire, gives elementary instruction in sex at age 13. Other authorities are equally variable in their approach.

Roman Catholic schools do not accept the Agreed Syllabus, but family living is mentioned as part of instruction in the Ten Commandments as for example, children must love, reverence and obey their parents.<sup>57</sup>

56) *Social Work* 14 (1957) pp. 313-314, Case Conference 1 No. 11 (March, 1955) p. 25; K. Bannister and others, *Social Casework in Marital Problems, The Development of a Psychodynamic Approach*. (London : Tavistock Publication, 1955).

57) *Biology and Human Affairs* (London : British Social Biology

As part of secular teaching the following table illustrates how little instruction in personal relations is given in English schools.

Table 9

Type of School	Primary	Secondary Modern	Secondary Technical	Secondary Grammar
Age range	5 - 15	11 - 16	11 - 16	11 - 18
Domestic Science (Girls)	60	89	3	40
Biology	32	75	1	35
Health Education	39	69	—	16
Sex Education	6	30	1	— *
Parentcraft	9	29	—	4
Family Life	3	9	—	1
No. of Schools Reporting	62	89	4	40

\* 25 give lessons in human reproduction in biology.

Source : *Biology and Human Affairs, loc. cit.*

This state of affairs is not unexpected when the response of the Ministry of Education to recent recommendations is considered. The Denning Committee recommended in 1947 the training of teachers in family life education and the Royal Commission on Population requested that 'in the educational system more regard was paid to preparation for family life'.<sup>58</sup> A similar trust in education was expressed by the Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce : "We are expressed by the Royal Commission on Marriage and Divorce : "We are convinced that . . . . . these objectives can only be achieved by education in the widest sense, by specific instruction before marriage, and by providing facilities for guidance after marriage and for conciliation if breakdown

Council, Tavistock Square, W.C. 1) vol. 18 (1952) pp. 6-19. See also Sex Education in Schools and Youth Organisations, Ministry of Education No. 119, (1943) and Pamphlet No. 31, Health Education, (1957)



threatens."<sup>58a</sup> No courses have been organized for teachers about personal relations or about the emotional aspects of family living since the Denning Committee reported.<sup>59</sup>

Catholic organisations have been sporadically active in this field not in the schools but as part of further education. After the 1946 rally which gave the stimulus to set up the Catholic Marriage Guidance Council, the Young Christian Catholic Marriage Guidance Council, the Young Christian Workers set up courses for the young working girl contemplating marriage. In these courses, which are residential and based on a week in the country, about two-thirds of the time is recreabased on a week in the country, about two-thirds of the time is recreational. No information is available about whether they still continue.

In 1947, too, the Young Christian Workers asked Warrington Education Committee to help them with a premarital training course. A week-end school attended by 500 young men and women and addressed by Catholic lectures was held.<sup>60</sup> Warrington has not repented this type of course. Between 1945 and 1949 Morley College in London provided six courses in family relations. The National Marriage Guidance Council has been active as an educational agency since 1950. It claims to have conducted in 1956, 200 general courses, mainly for young people. Over 2,000 engaged couples attended discussion groups and informal talks on preparation for marriage.<sup>61</sup>

Apart from the work of the churches, the National Marriage Guidance Council is the only organisation making provision on a significant scale for the further education of engaged couples in preparation for marriage. Much of this is pre-marital counselling.

58) Royal Commission of Population, Report, Cmd 7695, (London: HMSO, 1949) p. 211.

58a) Cmd. 9678, p. 11

59) **A.H.B. Ingleby**, Sex Education : a critical survey, Family Planning (London : Family Planning Assoc.,) Vol. 6, No. 1 April, 1957.

60) **J. Christie** Month 185 (1948) pp. 279-284.

61) County Borough of Warrington, Education Committee; the Principal, Morley College; and the Nat. Marr. Guidance Council; personal communications.

with one engaged couple, but more and more emphasis is being laid on group discussion under a skilled leader. Discussion leaders will soon be selected and trained in a fashion parallel to that now used for marriage counsellors and a rapid expansion of this side of the work is planned.

Probation officers are also in demand as lecturers, particularly outside London. Many are members of the local Rotary Club and important figures in the social life of their locality so that what they say carries weight.

### *Conclusion*

Besides those mentioned in the text, existing therapeutic potentialities in England for the treatment of marital disharmony should include the family doctor and the psychiatrist, both available under the National Health Service. Doctors have neither the time nor the skill to undertake this sort of remedial work and psychiatrists are also fully occupied with mental illness, though some do help considerably. The National Health Service does not aim to provide counselling.

Friends and relatives should also be mentioned, but community surveys, apart from two in East London, have noticed the transformation of neighbourhood and kinship centered family systems and there is evidence of the lack of social contact between families in a neighbourhood. Marital troubles, as distinct from child rearing, health, or monetary troubles, are usually hidden from all but the most intimate social interaction. The English culture pattern of neighbour relations — 'I keep myself to myself' — should also be remembered.<sup>62</sup>

Preventive agencies are, at present, less well organized than the remedial, though the preventive and educational side of the National Marriage Guidance Council has become much more important in the past two years. For the promotion of marital stability,

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62) A.T.M. Wilson, Some Reflections and Suggestions in the Prevention and Treatment of Marital Problems, *Human Relations* Vol. 2 No. 3 (1949) pp. 233-251, Bibliog.



however, the greatest problem is lack of knowledge. Family research has hardly begun in England. Although information on schools is scanty, it can be said with confidence that in schools and youth organisations the emphasis is on health or sex education, that is, on imparting to individuals information on the 'facts of life'. The Ministry of Education, through local education authorities, is also responsible for the Community Center movement. This lays its stress on neighbourhood social activities. Consequently in schools and youth organisations the acquisition of individualistic skills is stressed and beyond that, official emphasis rests upon that vague social group, the community.

The family is provided for only in its maternal and child-rearing aspects; its marital and paternal roles are entirely overlooked. There is a simple explanation for this. Cultural imperatives protecting the privacy of these relations are still too strong for official action.

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