

So you want to start a nursery?

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The Nurse Administrators Section of the Rcn is currently discussing, in its Area Groups, the provision of crèches and nurseries for children of the staff. Mr. Carr's article provides an admirable talking point

The demands to married women to take up employment as teachers and nurses have been increasing. There has been some response, but the problem remains—who will care for children under school age while mother is at work?

Naturally, the local authority can help to some extent but a project like a new hospital needs considerable thought.

The matron's position when interviewing married nurses is made very difficult by the applicant having children, as the hours offered are limited. At this stage it is most important to consider if the hospital will be able to provide a nursery. I use this word carefully and deliberately as the word 'crèche' suggests baby-minding, as in some large stores, which is not enough to provide the stability so necessary in a child's formative years.

The following comments may allow the interested hospital to view the pros and cons before embarking upon a difficult but extremely rewarding enterprise.

Assessing the Need

Local press advertising is one sure way of conveying the news to married nurses that thought is being given to the possibility of forming a nursery. The advertisement should possibly continue nightly for three to four weeks. It will show the posts available and the added necessary information 'Nursery facilities may be available'.

Should the response prove encouraging the advantages and disadvantages of a nursery should be reviewed.

Advantages

- (a) Extra staff will be available on weekdays from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. or so.
- (b) If the applicant is a young mother in her 20s or 30s she may well prove keen and up to date, and will readily settle in with ward routine.
- (c) The mother works with the full knowledge that her child is being cared for by expert people.

Disadvantages

- (a) Unless the nursery is open very late in the evening—which is undesirable—evening work will have to be undertaken by whole-time staff. If this is not properly controlled, whole-time staff will tend to work more evenings than previously.
- (b) Weekends may not be covered by the nursery.
- (c) *Infectious diseases*—remember, 20 staff using the nursery one day may be reduced drastically the next by one child contracting measles or chicken-pox.
- (d) Most children during the year have colds and minor illnesses. It is most important that children do not attend when feeling unwell, so allowance must be made for this. However, the mother should never feel guilty about taking time off for these little upsets.

Accommodation

The next step is to find a suitable building. The plan below shows the layout of a nursery recently opened within the New Geriatric Unit, Rednal, Birmingham.

At least three areas are necessary for children from the age of six weeks to five years.

Forty sq. ft. of floor area should be allowed for children under one year old, while two-to-five-year-olds should have at least 25 sq. ft. per child. Toilet and washing facilities must be adequate.

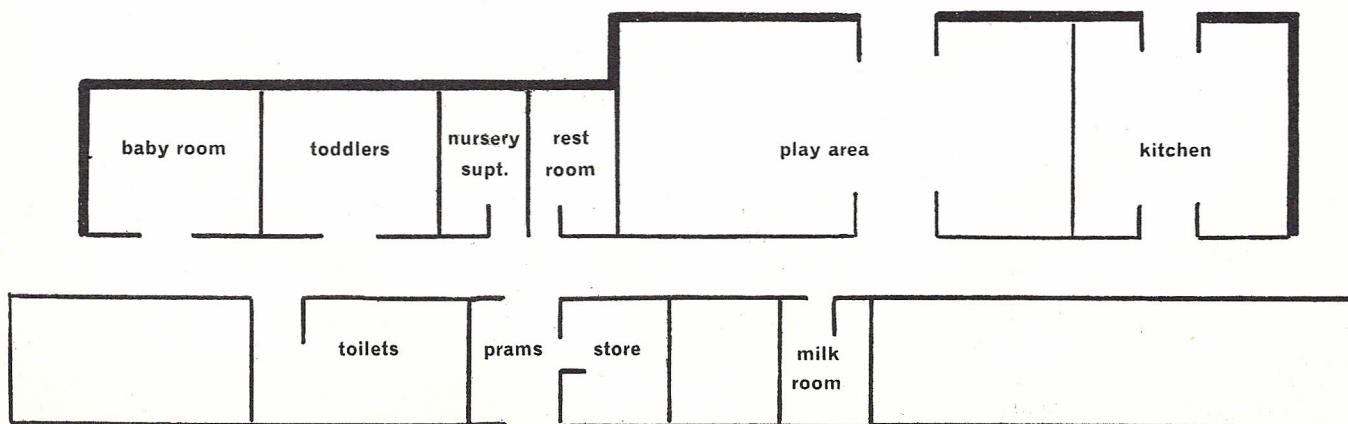
The next move is to approach the local public health authority through the hospital management committee.

It is doubtful if there is any legal requirement for a hospital to register a day nursery that is within the hospital building, but the help and guidance received, and the knowledge that the nursery is beyond reproach is, to say the least, essential.

Staffing

It is a requirement that the number of staff, both qualified and unqualified, should not be less than one member of staff to five children. This is very reasonable if one remembers that nature very rarely provides any mother with more than five children under school age.

The grades of staff are most important. A nursery superintendent, who would be of nursery matron rank, holding one of the following qualifications—SRN, RSCN, RFN—or a trained nursery nurse,



NNEB, should be appointed; she should have held a recent senior post in a day or residential nursery. A new project will be much more easily initiated with a good qualified person in charge.

A deputy superintendent should also be appointed. A nursery warden is very desirable for the two-to-five-year-olds as she will provide constructive educational play.

Staff nursery nurses, who make up the larger part of the team, are well trained and fairly easy to recruit. Nursery assistants can be employed from the age of 16 years, and this is an ideal outlet for girls who wish to take up nursing later.

A training school could be established, and the local authority would give details, but it is, perhaps, better to establish the nursery first.

A domestic assistant will be necessary, and in many cases it is best to have a special cook and an adjoining kitchen. Diets can be much more closely prepared and supervised and this, for a training school, is essential.

Equipment

The nursery superintendent should be quite capable of preparing a suitable list of equipment and toys needed for a nursery, but the list of essentials would include wooden cots for the babies; low rest beds for toddlers; unbreakable beakers, plates etc.; small knives, forks and spoons; feeding bottles; teats; bottle brushes; napkins; rubber panties; plastic aprons for nurses; gowns for nurses; overalls for children; light cotton clothing for toddlers; potties; face flannels; towels.

Toys

It is ideal to obtain a sum of money from your hospital for toys, so that one can at least start with a basis of new equipment, but it will be found that local people will be very generous in giving good quality second-hand toys. If £50-£70 can be raised, the following may well be bought: rocking horses (small and large); pedal cars; tricycles; scooters; blackboards and easels; chalks; water paints; constructional building bricks and sets; jigsaw puzzles; plenty of writing and drawing paper.

Admitting Children

The whole purpose of the nursery is to attract more staff, but this is not enough. The mother must be happy at work and the child well contented with his new friends. It is therefore wise to consider how the mother and child are welcomed on the first morning.

The mother should be greeted by the nursery superintendent, when particulars of the child will be entered in a register. This will include name, age, address, a record of illnesses, and the name and address of the general practitioner.

Depending upon the age of the child, the mother should spend the first day with him in the nursery. There are at least two reasons for this. First, the mother will become accustomed to the building and the staff—she could, of course, help with the department; the second reason is the stability of the child.

During this first day the child may well learn to mix with other children. It will be realized that at this time the child will very likely see more children in one place

than ever before. This is rather too much for him if his mother is not there. She will give him confidence.

A second day may be necessary for the mother, or the child. Occasionally, a week or even longer is required. Unless the mother is completely satisfied about her child she will not give of her best, so the nursery superintendent must have complete and absolute authority to call for the mother at any time.

A simple health check of the child should be made every day while mother is there. This will include looking at his throat, and the condition of his hair, feeling for swollen glands, and looking for discharging eyes or ears.

Scale of Charges

To make a nursery a paying concern, perhaps 10s. a day would be necessary. But this would greatly detract from the recruitment campaign, so a more reasonable charge is between 2s. 6d. and 5s. daily, covering food, drinks and so on.

Nursery Hours

The nursery hours are very much a debatable subject. For full cover at Rednal, the nursery is open Monday-Sunday, 8 a.m.-7 p.m. If these hours of opening are used and the night sister can be persuaded to start her duty at an earlier time on a rota basis, then a gap in the ward of trained staff is avoided.

So you still want to start a nursery . . . then you will find this an exciting venture well worth the superhuman effort involved.

Just to see the happy children and mothers is something which must be seen to be believed.