

PROBLEM FAMILIES:

Five Inquiries

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CHAPTER FOUR

THIRTY-FIVE PROBLEM FAMILIES

There follow thirty-five descriptions of problem families taken from our five surveys. They constitute a random sample from the three hundred and seventy-nine families; there has been no selection of especially bad cases. Indeed, it will be seen that several were described as border-line families for whom hopes could be entertained.

Case notes of problem families have been published before, as, for example, by the Women's Group on Public Welfare (32). But these families were specially selected in various ways or else they fell into specific categories. They relate to adults in prison for child neglect, to widows receiving supplementary pensions who neglected their children, to children admitted to Dr. Barnado's homes, and to certain obviously extreme examples. The families hereafter described were ascertained in different parts of England according to an agreed and common procedure of which the main features are that the information of several "agencies" was collated and sifted, and the families themselves were visited. They illustrate the type of family which is brought to light by a specified procedure which, if used in the future, will yield families of similar type. The case notes are reproduced almost as written, having been edited only in so far as seemed necessary to prevent the families being identified.

"A" Family.

This family of parents and eight female children, eldest ten years, live in two small rooms at the top of a house, one of a row of three-storey tenements. They are in continual financial difficulties owing to the father's long periods of unemployment—partly due to ill health and partly to his difficult temperament which makes it impossible for him to keep a job for long. He seems to be too lazy or too ignorant to sign on the panel when sick or to draw unemployment benefit when unemployed.

The home is filthy, stinks, and the windows are sealed with rags and paper. The furniture consists of three large beds, one chair, and one small table. In view of the complete lack of proper washing facilities it is amazing that the children are kept fairly clean and tidy.

The N.S.P.C.C. know the family well. The children are often absent from school, and miss school dinners, and it is always difficult to get them to hospital or a clinic if necessary.

Mr. A is always at the pawn shop and is said to be known to the police. The rent is always in arrears. There are frequent rows with the family below them.

The family has been a source of trouble for about five years.

" B " Family.

Family consists of mother and eight children (six boys and two girls) born between 1930 and 1947.

The father died early in 1948. Rumour says that they were not married and that he had a wife and family elsewhere. Whilst he was alive he periodically deserted his " wife ". Mrs. B. was at one time in a mental hospital, and although she does not appear to be mentally deficient she is very rude and aggressive. She seems to have no sense of responsibility for her family. Whilst the father was alive there was some semblance of family life although the flat was badly kept and the mother did nothing much to help. The flat is one of four rooms in a block built just before the last war. Since the death of the father, the mother stays in bed most mornings and goes out in the evening. Fortunately the two older girls look after the small children. There is insufficient neglect to amount to cruelty, but the N.S.P.C.C. are visiting the family to advise in a friendly way. All the children look pale and undernourished, one child has fits but Mrs. B. told the health visitor that " he would grow out of them ". She refuses to attend the infant welfare centre.

This family has been a worry to various welfare authorities for the past eight or nine years.

" C " Family.

The housewife (aged thirty-nine) works at home. Physically she appeared normal but her intelligence was considered to be subnormal. She seems to be completely ignorant of house management and child care. Both Mr. and Mrs. C. have been described as lazy, dirty, and incapable of exerting parental control. The mother's parents died when she was about thirteen and, at the age of nineteen, she had an illegitimate daughter who subsequently died.

The occupation of Mr. C. (aged forty-three) is described as that of a general labourer but he is frequently unemployed and there is a strong history of alcoholism, gambling, and smoking. He also is regarded as having a subnormal intelligence. His father was killed in the 1914-18 war and his mother remarried; he and his brother left home as soon as they started work.

There are six children ranging between sixteen and five. The five youngest, now at school, are regarded by their teachers as having an average intelligence although they frequently need attention for such minor ailments as impetigo, boils, otorrhoea, etc., and are often overtired. According to school reports they are cheerful and co-operative. All are in receipt of free dinners and one of the girls is a member of her church choir.

This family is not considered to be among the worst. The estimated weekly income from all known sources is £4 19s. 6d. There appears to be no valid reason why Mr. C. should not work regularly.

The home, inhabited by the family for seventeen years, is in slum property. The house is not really fit for human habitation. Two offers of rehousing have been turned down. There are five rooms with no

comforts; the furniture is dirty and broken and there is filth throughout the house. No proper bedclothes, or even mattresses, upon the bed.

"D" Family.

Mrs. D. (aged 32) has poor standards. Her health appears to be normal but she is mentally sub-normal. She has been variously described as:

"A poor manager, spends all the money given to her for house-keeping but does not pay the rent or the housekeeping bills".

"She has never attempted to keep her home clean; I have seen rotting cabbage in a drawer with children's clothing. She walks the streets with her child to get charity and is well known to charitable institutions. She has no control over money and no realisation of money's worth".

"A very bad manager; home in a shocking state".

Mr. D. (aged thirty-two) is described as clean and tidy. An ex-prisoner of war, he appears to have come from a better class family than his wife. Nevertheless he has no definite occupation and the estimated weekly income of the family is under three pounds. He has had an unsettled life. In his early post-school years he was apprenticed in a skilled trade and was happy; then, his parents separating, he and his mother left home to live in two rooms. There were frequent changes of job.

There are three children of four, three and eleven months, but the wife is again pregnant. Relations are not happy. There have been separations (though the two are now living together) during which Mrs. D. has been admitted to the casual ward together with the child now three. The eldest child now lives permanently with a grandmother. Mr. D. says he leaves his wife because of her domestic incompetence; yet he makes no serious attempt to hold down a job and gives her no real help. Mrs. D. might benefit from a period of "convalescence" in a training home. If birth control could be accepted, worse conditions might be prevented.

The house of four rooms has been occupied about two years and is situated in a rather poor district. It is described as very dirty, the broken furniture being totally inadequate.

"E" Family.

The health of the housewife (aged thirty-eight) is below par, though she is of normal intelligence. She looks worn out and informs us that she had had a very hard life with her husband. Indeed, she feels that she has almost reached the end of her tether.

Mr. E., aged forty-eight, is thought to be mentally sub-standard and, according to the housewife, is leading an immoral life. He goes out every night and refuses to help in the home.

There are eleven children; nine, ranging from fifteen to one year, live at home. Of these, the eldest, a boy of fifteen, has been in an approved school, but is said by the mother to be kind and helpful to her. Two boys aged seven and twelve are away from home in approved

schools. The children are well nourished and their clothing is fairly good, but they are defiant towards their mother and the father takes their part.

The home—a six roomed house in an old part of the town—is dirty and in need of repair and decoration. The meagre furniture is mostly broken.

“ F ” Family.

The housewife, aged forty-six, is frail, under-nourished and partly crippled with neuritis and high blood pressure. She has had a hard life and has done her best in difficult conditions. “ She is the type that would go without herself rather than allow husband and children to go short ”.

Mr. F., aged forty-two, a heavy smoker, drinker and gambler, works when the spirits moves him. When not working, he used to send his wife to borrow money from her family; they would lend it thinking that it was for her. When they learned that the money was claimed by Mr. F., the loans stopped.

Eleven children were born of whom two died. The remaining nine, ranging from twenty years to seven months, live at home. The three oldest girls are employed outside the home; four are at school; and the two youngest are permanently at home. The older children do not help their mother in her household tasks. All look under-nourished, like the housewife. The only one who looks well fed is Mr. F.

“ The home—a semi-detached council house—comprises four bedrooms, a large sitting room, and a good sized scullery. Bath, W.C., H. and C. water. Small gardens back and front are untended. Mrs. F. was washing in the scullery when I called. There were piles of clothing, shoes, stockings, underwear, on every article of furniture in the room, including the table and the piano. Also on the table were dirty crockery, remains of food, two jars of jam, vinegar bottle, toys, etc., and in one corner there was a big heap of stale crusts.

While I was speaking to Mrs. F. several children (of neighbours) came in and helped themselves to the crusts. Although the time was eleven-thirty a.m. the two younger children were in their night attire on the rug, the elder one, aged three, sucking tea from a baby’s bottle. Mrs. F. has been worn down by repeated pregnancies, the struggle to make ends meet, lack of co-operation from husband and children, and the demands of a large family ”.

Arrears of rent having accumulated, warnings were given; but no action was taken by Mr. F. An eviction order was then obtained. But arrears were paid through a special effort by the housewife.

“ G ” Family.

Mrs. G., aged forty-two, assessed as of sub-normal intelligence. Friendly and kind to her children but a most incompetent housewife and mother. Very dirty in her person. Spends her day sitting in the kitchen doing nothing. Incapable of preparing a decent meal for children. Speaks well of husband.

Husband, aged forty-six, a quiet and inoffensive man, is reported to gamble heavily and to be in constant debt. An irregular worker.

Seven children ranging from nineteen to four. Three at work outside home; three are at school; one permanently at home. The school children, badly clothed and shod, are dirty and complaints have been received about verminous heads. But they are fond of their mother and home.

Home situated in part of a large old house, nicely placed in a semi-rural district. Three bedrooms and kitchen; sitting room not used. Kitchen contains a rusty and neglected range, the oven apparently unused. Floor, windows and sink dirty. Furniture ramshackle, scanty and dirty. Income declared to be £5 10s. 0d. weekly but probably more with family allowances.

An example of a harmonious and united family living in squalor owing to fecklessness, irresponsibility, and incapacity of mother.

"H" Family.

Mrs. H., aged forty-six, feckless, easy-going, plausible, inoffensive, conspicuously incompetent housewife and mother. Occasionally works at a textile mill.

Mr. H., aged forty-seven, a labourer on roads. Irregular worker.

Seven children, the two eldest being away from home. Third, a girl of sixteen, in remand home pending trial: four charges of larceny. Three children of school age "shabbily and often inadequately clad; sometimes cannot attend school for lack of shoes. The hair of the two girls is often untidy, matted and gritty with nits". School attendance officer reports that he has seen the boy, aged seven, "sewn into a shirt instead of buttons being sewn on". Not uncommon for children to be sewn into their vests.

Home a five-roomed council house with bath, sparsely and poorly furnished, dirty, untidy, neglected. Living room and sitting room littered with clothing, newspapers, etc., floors dirty "in this case dirt was caked on the kitchen floor and scraping will be necessary before it can be cleaned". When visited, "Mrs. H. was sitting around smoking, the children, on holiday from school, were running round half-dressed and dirty. Mrs. H. said she was just thinking of cleaning up, but I doubt if she ever gets further than that. It was the middle of the morning, but there were no signs of preparation for cooking a meal". The housing manager reports: "In a district where the standard of house-keeping is high, this is the only family on the Council's estates without any sign of pride in their home". The head teacher writes: "Disgusting home conditions; seem insensitive to squalor and stench. Constant complaints have but momentary effect. Whole family seems to lack sense of self-respect and the words care and cleanliness are apparently foreign".

Health visitor reports: "Apparently re-housing in decent surroundings and the example of neighbours do not seem to have provided an incentive, and I doubt whether she will ever improve".

Yet the eldest daughter (now married) has grown up self-respecting and clean, and the younger children are not regarded as beyond hope of improvement.

"I" Family.

The housewife (aged twenty-two) had her first child (illegitimate) when she was under sixteen. Shortly after, she married the father of the child; he was twenty-one and serving with His Majesty's Forces.

From leaving school to the birth of the first child, Mrs. I. was employed as a shop assistant, and a clerk. She worked at three places in the short period of her working life. Mrs. I. is lazy and slatternly. Six pregnancies in six years and the absence from the age of sixteen of anyone to enforce discipline have combined to bring about the present state.

The family live in a disused army hut, one of a number occupied by squatters. Some have made the huts into comparatively comfortable dwellings; for the I's the hut is merely a habitation; there has been no attempt at home making. The only furniture are a few chairs, a table, an old dresser and a bed, all of which were bought second hand, or given to them. The chair seats have large holes where there was once horsehair covering. A couch minus its packing has been thrown out and lies near the doorway, apparently waiting to be chopped up. The living compartment is in an appalling state of poverty, dirt and disorder. There cannot be any routine cleaning; rubbish, dirty dishes, and the remains of meals are scattered over the table and floor, and round the dirty sink. A dog and a few hens hover round, the latter straying into the hut to pick up bits.

A neighbour states that Mrs. I. goes out several hours each day, taking with her the small child, returning in time to receive the older child on his return from school about four p.m. The husband and this child are out for the midday meal. Where Mrs. I. goes each day is not known—probably to cafes, to the cinema, or to her mother's home.

There is, as yet, no evidence of vice, but with such rapidly declining standards, this may set in if some action is not soon taken. Mrs. I. has stated that she would like to go out to work, if she were not handicapped by frequently recurring pregnancies.

Little is known of the husband except that he frequently takes days off from work; he has not worked a full week in the past two years, though formerly he had a good record. He pleads ill health.

The rent of the hut is but 4s. 6d. per week, but they are deeply in arrears.

Mrs. I.'s mother's home is clean in comparison to this hut.

Case known to: Health Department, Housing Department, S.A.A.F.A.

At present address: thirty-six months. Three previous changes of address.

Rooms, two: persons in household, four; two miscarriages, a death in infancy, two children alive; pregnant when visited.

"J" Family.

Housewife (aged thirty-three) mentally dull; she lacked early training; and was brought up in unsatisfactory conditions.

First child born out of marriage when she was twenty. Mrs. J's mother had no sense of moral responsibility, is reported to have lived with several men and is at present time co-habiting.

The family has been known to the V.D. department for some years.

Mr. J., also of low mentality, is occupationally unstable.

Both Mr. and Mrs. J. appear to lack the will and ambition to maintain a decent standard. They could probably do better if any person or persons had the power to make them work. This fact was recently established when proceedings were taken against them for child neglect. During the period before the hearing, the house was cleaned up, new bedding obtained, and clothing washed. The magistrates, however, found the case proved and sentenced the husband and wife to six months imprisonment.

A visit to the house made after their discharge from prison showed that no real change for the better had taken place; both will slip back into old habits unless close supervision and help are given. The house would cost some forty or fifty pounds to raise living standards to a decent level.

Case known to: Health Department, N.S.P.C.C., Mental Health Service.

At present address: thirty months. Four rooms: four in household. Three children, the eldest (illegitimate) a mental defective in an institution.

"K" Family.

Mr. K. deserted his legal wife and two children in 1936 for Miss X. (the "housewife") who was then twenty-one and pregnant.

Miss X. has had six children by Mr. K. since she began to live with him. One child died, another was adopted, and four children are living with the parents. Besides supporting this family, Mr. K. pays £2 per week on a maintenance order to his legal wife. Thus there is considerable financial hardship and Miss X. (when not pregnant) has taken up paid work to ease the situation.

She is a clean hard-working woman but is continually harassed by Mr. K., of whom she appears afraid. He has assaulted her on several occasions. He is, indeed, a criminal type, having served several terms of imprisonment for housebreaking and for non-payments of the court maintenance order.

The home is poor and ill equipped.

Case known to: Health Department.

At present address forty-four months; four previous changes known. Two rooms: six in household. Six children (all illegitimate) one being away from home and one having died. Two further children by man's legal wife.

"L" Family.

The husband (Mr. L.) is an unstable and anti-social character and since 1936 has served numerous prison sentences. He drinks and gambles to excess and has persistently neglected the family. After the death of his first wife, Mr. L. co-habited with his present wife, now aged thirty-nine. She had two children by him before they married, but before marriage both appeared before the court on a charge of child neglect. Mr. L. was sentenced to six months imprisonment, and the present wife, then a single woman, was bound over. The children by the first marriage were brought up for a time in the social welfare homes.

Mrs. L. is of sub-normal intelligence, stubborn and aggressive. She has had eight pregnancies between the years 1936 and 1949, and is quite unable to cope with her domestic responsibilities. She recently appeared before the magistrates on a charge of assaulting a neighbour.

The house is in an appalling state of chaos and neglect. The children, frequently verminous and dirty, are ill-nourished and poorly clothed. Discipline is absent.

The parents appear unfit to have the care of children. In 1938 the family was rehoused in a corporation house, which was then reduced to a slum.

Case known to: Health Department, Education Department, N.S.P.C.C., Police.

At present address—over five years. Four rooms, eight in household. Six children (two illegitimate), one still-birth and housewife pregnant when visited. Four children by husband's first wife, one with criminal record.

"M" Family.

This family's low standards are partly due to a rapidly increasing family (the housewife, aged twenty-eight, has had six pregnancies) and partly to small and irregular wages. The husband, said to have occasional attacks of petit mal, could probably work more regularly than he does.

The wife's excitable and aggressive temperament has been aggravated by recurrent pregnancies. She has become known to the police because of quarrels with neighbours.

Mrs. M. was an only child. Her mother has stated that she was always "a handful to manage".

The children are well nourished, clothing is fairly good, they look happy and have toys to play with, but are frequently found to be verminous at school cleanliness inspections.

The home is poorly equipped, dirty, and very dull. Mrs. M. has little aptitude for housecraft, and as the family increases, conditions get gradually worse. Birth control has been offered but Mrs. M. will not make the necessary effort to attend a clinic.

Case known to: Health Department, Education Department, Police.

At present address over five years; five rooms, seven in household. Six pregnancies; five children alive, one dead.

" N " Family.

Mrs. N., a woman of moderate intelligence, married at nineteen and has had twelve pregnancies in sixteen years. At thirty-five, she looks worn out. Cooking and providing for the family is only part of her job; in addition she does the family wash and some cleaning and decorating with a little help from the fourteen-year-old daughter.

The children lack proper care and attention, being frequently dirty, verminous and ill-clothed.

Mr. N. has had various labouring jobs and several short spells of unemployment during the period under review.

The home is very poorly equipped, without a vestige of comfort. The only toys seen were two tiny undressed dolls which the five- and two-year-old children displayed with the greatest delight.

Case known to: Health Department, Education Department, N.S.P.C.C., Police.

At present address—over five years. Six rooms, nine in household. Seven children in home; one in approved school having been charged with larceny. One death in early infancy (premature birth), one still-birth, two miscarriages.

" O " Family.

This family has been a problem almost from the start of family life. Mrs. O., a woman of very limited intelligence now aged forty-three, married at seventeen and had her first child when she was eighteen. Between 1923 and 1946 thirteen children were born, of whom eleven are now living. Mrs. O. was not sufficiently equipped mentally to cope with a family of this size, particularly as she was so inexperienced at the outset. She has several times been ill after confinements. Birth control advice was not accepted.

Mr. O. is unco-operative and there have been quarrels because of his association with another woman.

The home has for years been in a state of destitution and although there is now a good weekly income, the older children contributing, there is no appreciable change. The family have lived in squalor for so long that their standards appear to have become permanently vitiated. The corporation house in which they live has been reduced to a slum, the garden is trodden down like a field path, furniture and domestic equipment are inadequate, the rooms are cluttered with unnecessary rubbish.

There has of late been some improvement in personal hygiene but living standards leave much to be desired.

The children appear happy, but the younger members of the family are frequently absent from school without due cause. There is no history of delinquency.

The parents recently appeared before the court for child neglect and were bound over.

Case known to: Health Department, School Medical Department; Housing Department, N.S.P.C.C., Education Department (school mistress).

At present address over five years. Six rooms, thirteen in household. Eleven children alive and at home; two deaths in infancy.

"P" Family.

Mrs. P., now aged thirty-six, is mentally defective; she cannot read or write, and did not attend an ordinary school but is reported to have had a little private education. She married Mr. P. at twenty-five.

Mr. P. is feckless, will not work, is continually in and out of jobs, and appears to exist on public funds. A few years ago he was sentenced to three months' imprisonment for child neglect. At the court hearing he was stated to have had five jobs found for him during a period of twelve months. At the same court, Mrs. P. was bound over for twelve months, and for a time she stayed in the social welfare institution. The children were placed in children's homes. Six months later, the couple resumed family life again, but the baby was only in the mother's care for a few weeks, when it died of an infection. Another child was born in the next year. Although she had but two live children, Mrs. P's mentality was so low that she was incapable of looking after them, and the husband took no interest at all in his family.

An officer for the N.S.P.C.C. recently visiting the P.'s lodgings found children and parents sleeping on dirty rags on the floor. Thereafter the children have been in the care of the local authority.

The P.'s are homeless. They flit from one lodging to another. Squalor, dirt and debt are habitual. They have no furniture or possessions other than those they carry with them. Mr. P. is at the present time staying with his family having been turned out of the last lodging. Mrs. P. is living with her parents who occupy a combined room in a disreputable lodging house.

Case known to: Health Department, N.S.P.C.C., Education Department, Social Welfare Department.

Family homeless. Two children adopted by local authority. One died in first year.

"Q" Family.

The housewife, aged forty-six, is extremely obese but also anæmic. She was married and had her first child at eighteen and has since had nine pregnancies. Six children are living. Physical disabilities and repeated child-bearing, added to an over-placid temperament, have induced an indifference to domestic responsibility. Mrs. Q. appears to be physically incapable of coping successfully with domestic duties without help.

The home is dirty and the children are frequently ill-clothed and unkempt.

The family appear normal mentally and there is a possibility that they may pass out of the problem class as the older children assume responsibility. But there is reason to think that their standards have already been vitiated by bad example and poor training.

The husband has several times changed his place of occupation to earn more. Financial difficulties now contribute little to the problem.

The family live in a corporation house of the non-parlour type; the only living room is too small, thus adding to the general congestion and disorder.

Case known to: Health Department, Education Department, Housing Department, N.S.P.C.C.

At present address over five years. Four rooms, seven in household. Five children in home, one away, one death in infancy, one still-birth, one miscarriage.

" R " Family.

This is a problem of parental irresponsibility and a broken home.

Mr. R., aged thirty-five, has always been an indifferent worker. This instability led to frequent quarrels and separations; finally Mrs. R. obtained a court separation order and is now living with her mother.

Mr. R., however, failed to make regular payments (he was sentenced to imprisonment for non-payment) and the family is now mainly supported by public funds.

Mrs. R. is a large, obese woman of thirty-four with an easy temperament and limited capacities. Her standards of housecraft and mothercraft have always been poor. Both Mr. and Mrs. R. have conspicuously failed in the care and control of their children. The eldest, aged seventeen was sent to an approved school after he had been before the court on a charge of larceny. He returned home a few months ago and went to live with his mother. Another job was lost because of absenteeism. He then quarrelled with his mother and went to live with his father; he is now reported to be doing casual work on farms.

The second child (a girl) has been twice before the court and is now in an institution for mental defectives. This girl had a bad school attendance record; she is reported to have borrowed money from neighbours in her mother's name to spend on herself. Before being sent away she plied between her mother's and father's homes, truanting from school, doing much as she pleased.

Case known to: Health Department, Education Department, Police.

Broken home: two children live with mother; a son is an agricultural labourer after residence in an approved school; a daughter is mentally defective in an institution. One miscarriage.

" S " Family.

The father (forty-eight), and the mother (forty-six), Mr. and Mrs. S., are both of subnormal intelligence, eccentric in dress and behaviour, odd in appearance and socially incompatible with the rest of the community (more sinned against than sinning).

They married in middle life; the first child was born some ten years ago, the second the year after. One child is stated to be very dull at school.

The husband is a labourer and works regularly. They are lodging dwellers, having been unable to get the tenancy of a house.

The standard of living and child care is poor, but not bad. The

children are well-nourished and reasonably well-clothed but at school have several times been found verminous.

Case known to: Health Department, Education Department, N.S.P.C.C.

Two rooms in lodgings; four in household. Two children.

" T " Family.

Mr. T., who drinks and gambles to excess, was occupationally unstable up to 1943, since when he has been continually on the sick list. Housewife (aged forty) is of low intelligence; she had an illegitimate child to husband when she was his housekeeper, and was pregnant with second child at marriage. Children ill-clothed, poorly fed, mismanaged and undisciplined. Very poor home.

Mr. T. has had eleven children by his first wife and four children by his second (the present Mrs. T.). The family has been reared on public funds, poverty being habitual. Six children by the first wife have died (three in adolescence).

The standard of living is extremely low. The home is bare and comfortless beyond description. The living room contains two or three wooden chairs, a table, a dresser and an old couch without its packing, covered with an old piece of sacking. There are no floor coverings or soft furnishings. Upstairs there are five beds. Apparently no member of the family has any possessions or clothing except those which can be stored in the dresser drawers.

The present income is £7 18s. 0d. Of this thirty shillings are wages earned by the eldest son; the rest is money drawn from public sources, e.g., family allowances fifteen shillings, blind allowance (wife) fifteen shillings, sickness benefit supplemented by National assistance (husband) £4 18s. 0d.

Mr. T. is reported to keep the purse; he collects the whole of the income and distributes it as he thinks fit. Mrs. T., a weak character, is unable to deal effectively with her husband. She has an ocular defect. There is constant friction in the home over financial affairs.

Mrs. T., has of late refused to co-habit with her husband; she says that she does not want more children and would like a separation. The probation officer has the case in hand.

The case is known to: Health Department, Education Department, N.S.P.C.C., Social Welfare Department.

At present address over five years. Four rooms, seven in household, among them a child by Mr. T.'s first marriage, three children by his second marriage, and a child born by Mrs. T. out of wedlock. There are four children by Mr. T.'s first marriage away from home (one with an approved school record), and six children by this marriage have died. One child by Mr. T.'s second marriage has died.

" U " Family.

Mrs. U. aged thirty-seven is a certified mental defective who married at eighteen, being pregnant at time of marriage. Mr. U. is illiterate, lazy and irresponsible.

Very low standards of personal and domestic hygiene prevail in this household which has been a problem from the start of family life.

An extract from a record, written during the first year of married life when there was one child, reads: "House dirty, mother no sense of duty regarding cleanliness or preparation of food. Husband silly, unemployed before marriage and not worked since marriage".

Conditions have become steadily worse as the family has increased. From 1931 to 1947 Mrs. U. had ten live births and one still-birth. Of the ten, two have died, four are in approved schools and are backward, and those at home are ill-cared for and undisciplined.

The house is in a state of chronic dirt and disorder. The family has lived at nine different addresses over a period of fifteen years.

Mr. U. will not work; he pleads ill-health due to gastric disorder. He has served a term of imprisonment for theft, and was later charged and fined for assault. He was recently fined for neglecting a domestic animal.

The parents have been bound over for child neglect.

Case known to: Health Department, Education Department, N.S.P.C.C., Superintendent of Children's Homes, Social Welfare Department.

In present home under five years, seven previous addresses in same district. Five rooms, six in household, including four children. Four children are away from home in approved schools, two children have died young and there has been one miscarriage. Mrs. U. was pregnant when visited.

"V" Family.

Mr. and Mrs. V. are social inefficient, both lazy and indifferent.

Mr. V. who says that he suffers from a gastric disorder, has not worked for years. The family has been reared on public funds.

Mrs. V., aged thirty-three, an irresponsible and silly woman, is an incessant talker and untruthful. Very slim and active despite nine pregnancies, she walks energetically round the town. In contrast to her husband, who looks like a tramp, and to her children whom she leaves at home often unwashed and undressed, she is surprisingly tidy in her outward appearance.

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. V. can read or write. Mrs. V. has vicious traits and has been known to strike her husband.

The family is of nomadic habit, having lived at fourteen addresses during a period of twelve years; they incur debts in a district, then leave it. The Corporation house in which they lived for a time was reduced to a slum; finally, they were evicted for non-payment of rent.

The present house is in an indescribable state of filth and poverty. The children are under-nourished and badly clothed, yet both parents smoke, drink and gamble.

The case is known to: Health Department, School Medical Department, Education Department, Housing Authority, N.S.P.C.C., Social Welfare Department.

At present address ten months, fourteen previous addresses. Five

rooms, seven in household including five children. Four children have died in infancy.

" W " Family.

Mrs. W., aged thirty-nine, is of subnormal intelligence, being unstable, erratic, suspicious and talkative. Low standard of personal and domestic hygiene. Children untrained and undisciplined.

Mrs. W. has twice left her husband because (she stated) he went out at night and left her with the children. Home conditions are poor; she shows no ability for housecraft, having lacked initial training. A sister and an aunt live in similar conditions.

The eldest child was admitted to an approved school for a house-breaking offence.

No reliable information was obtained about Mr. W.

The case is known to: Health Department, N.S.P.C.C., Education Department, Probation Officer.

At present address over five years. Four rooms, six in household of whom four are children. One child is away from home in an approved school. One child died in infancy. A still-birth and a miscarriage.

" X " Family.

Mr. and Mrs. X. come from poor families. Mrs. X. (aged forty-three), was married very young, the first of her twelve children being born when she was fifteen or sixteen. Mr. X. cannot do heavy work owing to a permanent disability sustained on active service during the first world war.

The standard of living, low for many years, is improving a little now. Provision of food is adequate; but clothing is poor and household equipment in short supply.

The house is clean but bare. Mr. X. keeps the purse.

The family was rehoused before the war under a slum clearance scheme. The garden is not cultivated.

The case is known to the Health and Education Departments. Four rooms, ten in household of whom eight (one mentally defective) are children. Four children, two dull and backward and one delinquent, away from home.

" Y " Family.

Mr. Y. is one of a family of fourteen of whom eight died in infancy. Mrs. Y., aged forty-four, is also one of a big family, several of whom died in infancy. Both parents appear normal mentally but are indifferent about their family responsibilities.

The husband, a large, contented-looking individual, has not worked for years. Various health visitors have from 1941 onwards reported on his disinclination for work. One wrote in 1945: "Father has been working but gave it up because he received more on public assistance".

Mrs. Y. has had twelve children and, apart from a mild degree of anæmia, looks well and young. She appears happy and contented and

is apparently too placid to make the necessary effort to raise the standard of living or to deal effectively with her husband.

The house is clean but lacks any form of comfort.

The case is known to: Health Department, School Medical Department, N.S.P.C.C., Social Welfare Department.

Six rooms, eleven in household of whom nine are children. Two children are away from home. One died in infancy.

" Z " Family.

Mr. Z., who recently died, was an unreliable, unstable character, habitually idle and in debt for which two prison sentences were served. He was also a gambler and a drunkard, and has no sense of responsibility, his family having been paupers throughout his lifetime.

Thirteen children were reared on public funds.

Mrs. Z., aged forty-six, a weak character, had her first child (before marriage) at seventeen. She married Mr. Z. at nineteen.

Since the husband's death Mrs. Z. has been given the tenancy of a corporation house, and the family could now be very comfortable if the employed members pulled their weight and contributed a fair share of their wages. But they appear to be developing anti-social characteristics. The eldest daughter, a separated wife, lived at home for a while, but left after quarrelling with her mother. The eldest son pays eight shillings per week for the use of a bedroom and keeps himself. He is associating with a married woman. A second son pays for board and lodging and contributes one pound per week although his weekly wages are six to eight pounds. The third son, aged seventeen, gives his mother all his wages.

The home, bare and comfortless, lacks orderly management and care. The children are untrained and undisciplined.

Although the family has occupied this house for nearly a year no attempt has been made to cultivate the garden.

The family is known to: Health Department, Education Department, Social Welfare Department, N.S.P.C.C., Police.

At present address for nine months, six previous moves known; four rooms; eleven in household of whom ten are children. Two married children (one separated from spouse) away from home. One child died. One miscarriage.

" AB " Family.

Mrs. AB., aged thirty-two, is an uncertified mental defective, married to an unstable man. Her dullness, lack of wits and unwise spending have led her into the habit of lying to get herself out of difficulties. She was recently sentenced to a term of imprisonment for theft, and has been before the court several times because of debt.

Mr. AB., an obstinate and eccentric character, has had a bad work record and has been fined for absenteeism. He frequently takes time off for sickness, his symptoms being vague and indefinite. He prefers tinkering about in the home to working at his own job. The children are ill cared for, badly fed and poorly clothed. One or other is frequently

under treatment for an illness or minor ailment consequent on low standards of hygiene.

Mr. AB., is fully aware of his wife's mental disability, but he makes only spasmodic attempts to help her.

Birth control advice has been disregarded.

The family is known to: Health Department, Education Department, N.S.P.C.C., Police.

Four rooms; seven in household of whom five are children. Three children are reported as frequently verminous. One subnormal in intelligence.

"CD" Family.

Mrs. CD., thirty-six, herself comes of a problem family. She was brought up in bad conditions and when young lacked domestic training and moral guidance. Her family is known to the venereal diseases department.

Mrs. CD. is of low mentality. Married at seventeen and a half, she had her first child at eighteen. Nine children have been born, of whom two are registered mental defectives.

Mrs. CD. has no vices but lacks the intelligence to manage household affairs. The children are reasonably well nourished, but clothing is frequently dirty and inadequate. Conditions are aggravated by the size of the family.

Mr. CD. is a labourer and works regularly when well. He has had treatment for gastric disorder.

The family occupy a corporation house. It is bare and cheerless. A fair-sized garden is totally untended, trodden down like a field path and the fence is broken.

Family relationships are happy.

The family is known to: Health Department Education Department, School Medical Department, Housing Department.

Four rooms: ten in household, of whom eight are children. One died.

"EF" Family.

The EF.'s are a homeless family; they have lived with relatives or in lodgings since marriage.

Mr. EF. is an unreliable, unstable character, with criminal propensities; he has three convictions for theft. He is separated from his wife but has the custody of the eldest child.

Mrs. EF., twenty-six, is morally and temperamentally unstable; she frequently deserted her family because of domestic strife. She is a young active woman who could work for her living but she prefers an easy life. She receives a separation allowance for herself and the younger child of whom she has the custody. She was once turned out of her parents' home because of her irregular mode of living (late hours, etc.). This incident occurred when she was living apart from her husband.

The children have suffered from the parents' instability. They have been in and out of the social welfare homes in times of domestic crisis. The elder child is reported to be developing anti-social traits; neighbours have complained of his behaviour. He lives with his father and paternal grandparents who appear to have no interest whatsoever in his welfare.

The family is known to: Health Department, Police, Superintendent of Children's Homes.

"GH" Family.

Mrs. GH., thirty, is educationally subnormal (I.Q. sixty-four according to old school report). Her mother, sister and uncle are of low mentality. Mrs. GH. has a poor background; as a girl she was brought up in a lodging house. She married at nineteen and had her first child the same year; there were five pregnancies in nine years. The standard of housecraft and mothercraft is appallingly low, and discipline is absent.

Mrs. GH. is talkative and continually makes excuses for the low standards, complaining that her husband drinks and gambles. The health visitor has failed to make any impression on her. Mrs. GH. is physically capable of doing better and would no doubt work under supervision, but she seems incapable of putting out the necessary effort of will and it is doubtful whether training without disciplinary measures would achieve the desired results.

Mr. GH. is an unstable character who drinks, gambles and frequently change jobs.

The family is known to the Health Department, the Education Department, and the N.S.P.C.C. At present address fourteen months; two previous changes known. Four rooms, six in household of whom four are children. Two of these are mentally backward. One child has died and there has been one still-birth.

"IJ" Family.

Mrs. IJ., thirty-two, was married at nineteen, and nine children have since been born. Mrs. IJ. is a young active woman, feckless and irresponsible. Repeated child-bearing does not appear to have affected her adversely. Living conditions have been extremely low for years and the standard remains unchanged in spite of high wages during war years. The house is bare of furniture and household equipment; mis-spending is obvious. Both parents smoke heavily.

Mr. IJ. is a small, poor-looking individual who appears to be dominated by his wife. The health visitor has reported domestic quarrels, the wife complaining of the husband's cruelty. After seeing them together, I have the impression that Mrs. IJ. is well able to defend herself.

The children are fairly well nourished, but clothing is poor and ill-kept.

The family is known to: Public Health Department, N.S.P.C.C., and Housing Department.

Four rooms: ten in household of whom eight are children. None reported subnormal. One child is living away with relatives.

"KL" Family.

Mrs. KL., twenty-four, is the daughter of problem parents. Her father deserted his family, and her mother, with the children, was admitted to a Poor Law Institution. The mother was later taken out of the institution by a man with whom she cohabited and by whom she had a second family. The children of the marriage (including Mrs. KL.) were afterwards discharged into her care, but they were later readmitted because of their unfavourable background.

At seventeen Mrs. KL. had an illegitimate child. At nineteen she married Mr. KL. A second child was born when she was twenty. Three children were subsequently born. Mrs. KL., a replica of her mother, is lazy and indifferent. The house is always in a state of dirt and disorder. The living room furniture and a utility dining room suite, comprising sideboard, tables and chairs, go uncleaned and undusted, while Mrs. KL. sits reading. A pet dog has completely destroyed the straw filling of the couch.

The children are frequently dirty and ill-clothed, and they are undisciplined. The six year-old child has a bad school attendance record.

Mr. KL. appeared a decent type at the time of marriage. He was clean and of tidy appearance and worked fairly regularly; but a decline of character has been observed during the past two or three years.

When Mrs. KL. was pregnant with her fifth child, her husband was reported to be associating with another woman.

The rent is only seven shillings and sixpence per week, but Mrs. KL. is deeply in arrears.

The family is known to: The Health Department, N.S.P.C.C., Social Welfare Department, School Medical Department.

The KL.'s have lived at the present address for eighteen months, two previous addresses in the district being known.

Four rooms: six in household, including four children. One child lives away under family care.

"MN" Family.

Mr. MN, an unemployable and unstable type, has never stuck to any job. He was psychiatrically treated when serving in the Forces during the late war from which he was discharged with a pension. The pension was disallowed in 1948 because of failure to attend a medical board. Mr. MN. has not worked except for odd days since he left the forces. Mrs. MN states that his behaviour is abnormal; he wanders about in the early hours when the rest of the family is sleeping. He is in receipt of sickness benefit supplemented by national assistance. From the records it seems that the family has been reared mainly on public funds.

Mrs. MN., thirty-seven, is extremely dull and is unable to cope with the responsibilities of a home and family. She had a verminous head when admitted to hospital for a recent confinement. She appears unable to do the simplest task with any degree of skill. The Corporation house in which the family live is very dirty, equipment being of the scantiest. The furniture is dilapidated, although reported to have been new in 1945. Old cushions and curtains are full of dust and dirt. A foul smell pervades the house. Mrs. MN. is mentally incapable of assessing her own standards. There is no history of vice or delinquency, but discipline is almost absent. The three eldest boys were sent to approved schools because they were persistently absent from school, in spite of the mother having been warned. The father was at the time in the forces.

The family is known to: Education Department, N.S.P.C.C., Social Welfare Department.

Four rooms: four in household including two young children. Three other children are in approved schools.

"OP" Family.

Husband and wife, both of low mental standard, have had twelve children, of whom two are in mental deficiency institutions and three are boarded out by the local education authority. The husband is employed as a labourer at an engineering works. A married daughter, with her husband and three children, live in the same house.

The house is always in a chaos of dirt and disorder, with scraps of food and refuse everywhere. When visited at twelve fifteen p.m., the remains of breakfast were still on the living-room table, together with an infant's chamber pot. It is doubtful if any improvement may be expected so far as the parents are concerned. The mother is too dull-witted to profit by advice or help.

"QR" Family.

This family consists of husband, wife, five children of from one to ten years, and the wife's illegitimate son aged seventeen years. The husband is a millwright in a large factory. The income is approximately eleven pounds a week.

The parents are ill-assorted and indifferent to the welfare of their children. When visited at eleven a.m. the wife was gossiping with a neighbour, all the children were still in their nightclothes and the house was in disorder.

The illegitimate son, now employed, has been under the care of the probation officer.

"ST" Family.

Husband and wife are both of low mental standard. They have ten children of from three to fifteen years. The husband is an unskilled labourer and the eldest daughter works for a dressmaker. The total income including family allowances is probably about eight pounds a week.

The house and children are constantly dirty, but the children appear well-nourished and they look happy and cheerful. The house, though of fairly recent construction, is too small—two bedrooms, a living room and a scullery. At one period all the family slept on the floor, but subsequently beds and bunks were obtained for them.

The mother would benefit from help and encouragement, but she has too many children to cope with and she lives too far from the centre of the town to make proper use of the local health authority's services.