

1978). For such provision to achieve savings in the use of hospital beds, psychiatric teams would require ready access to the non-hospital units. In practice this would mean these facilities becoming operationally part of the psychiatric service. More day care, including a day hospital capable of managing acutely disturbed patients and some expansion in community psychiatric nursing manpower, would also be required.

Interestingly, our survey did not provide evidence that a crisis hostel, recently promoted as a valuable alternative to psychiatric admission, would produce a significant saving in bed usage. A study of the reasons surrounding a series of consecutive admissions is required to provide estimates of the potential demand for such a unit and the other alternatives to admission that might be developed.

We do not believe that it would be either desirable or feasible to run a psychiatric service with the levels of in-patient bed provision advocated in some planning documents.⁶ Attempts to make drastic cuts in bed numbers without the phased introduction of community-based alternatives would lead to an unacceptably low standard of care for patients who would be rapidly cycled through an untherapeutic in-patient facility. There are undoubted positive indications for hospital admission, extending beyond the management of dangerousness, severe psychosis and psychiatric illnesses complicated by significant medical problems.⁷ These include the assessment and reassessment of diagnosis and level of functioning, refinements in drug management and the implementation of treatment programmes that are difficult to provide outside hospital and, most importantly, respice care when the burden of caring

becomes too great for families and community support systems.⁸ The need for in-patient care will be greater in areas such as Camberwell where social deprivation makes the support that can be offered by the natural community that much more tenuous, and the conditions to which patients must return after an episode of illness that much worse than the norm.

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