

The times

Private medical insurers – independent hospitals seek better communications

Private medical insurers and providers of health care services need to work more closely together so that patients receive the best care possible, say the Psychiatric and Substance Abuse Standing Committee of the Independent Healthcare Association. Patients need to know their entitlements to health care services under their private medical insurance policies.

Doctors who use independent hospitals' facilities need to know whether private medical insurers recognise their qualifications. What is needed is an agreed set of criteria for acceptance of doctors' qualifications so that patient, doctor, hospital and insurer

can be confident that high standards of health care are being maintained. IHA Members will be working towards this through a working party.

Commenting on these developments, David Wakefield, Chairman of the IHA Psychiatric and Substance Abuse Standing Committee and Managing Director of Priory Hospitals Group said, "I am delighted that providers belonging to IHA are taking steps to improve communications with the private medical insurers. It can only be of benefit to patients both in terms of quality of care and in keeping costs down".

New attention on children who abuse

A Committee of Enquiry has been established, under the Chairmanship of National Children's Home (NCH) Chief Executive, Tom White CBE, on the issue of children and young people who abuse other children. The Committee met for the first time on 1 October 1990 and will meet over the next year on about ten occasions.

The aim is to prepare a report, to include recommendations, by October 1991. Some of the meetings will take the form of 'consultations' where specialists in certain fields relating to the subject of the enquiry will be invited to share their experience with the Committee.

The Committee has the following terms of reference:

- (1) to investigate the problem of children and young people under 18 who sexually abuse other children, having regard to:
 - (a) known incidence
 - (b) extent of existing treatment facilities
 - (c) the management of case investigation
 - (d) appropriate forms of intervention to change and/or modify such behaviour
 - (e) appropriate management processes needed to maximise effective service
- (2) to make recommendations.

Members of the Committee are: Rosemary Arkley, DoH Inspectorate (Observer); Ann Doyle, Rainer Foundation; Dr Arnon Bentovim, Consultant Child Psychiatrist, Great Ormond Street; Irene Bloomfield, Social Work Practitioner, Dundee; David Glasgow, Psychologist/Researcher, Liverpool University; Alan Holden, Director Harrow Social Services/Secretary Children and Family Committee ADSS; Valerie Howarth, Director, Childline; Rupert Hughes, DoH Assistant Secretary (Observer); Des McGinn, Salford Probation Service; Phillip Noyes, Head of Public Policy, NSPCC; Jennifer Temkin, Professor of Law, Buckingham University; Dr Eileen Vizard, Consultant Child Psychiatrist, London Borough of Newham; Tom White (Chair), Chief Executive, NCH.

Secretariat:

Jan van Wagendonk (NCH Development Consultant, Child Sexual Abuse); Cathy Cooper (NCH Policy Unit).

If anyone would like to present evidence to the Committee, or has experience in this subject area, please write to Cathy Cooper, NCH, 85 Highbury Park, London N5 1UD (telephone 071 226 2053; fax 071 226 2537).

See Correspondence, p. 43