

## The College

### Preservation of psychiatric records

From time to time, members of the College become concerned at the proposal to dispose of patients' records owing to their bulk, the cost of storage, etc. This note is to bring to members notice the recent Department of Health circular HC/89/20 detailing responsibilities of health authorities under the Public Records Act. Appendix C of this circular lays down minimum retention periods for records which are not for permanent preservation and in some cases a period as short as eight years is laid down. However (Paragraph 16), it is noted that special considerations apply to records of mentally disordered people, and

the period of 20 years from the date at which in the doctor's opinion the disorder has ceased (and Paragraph 13), as long as the person of "unsound mind" remains under disability, is also mentioned.

Members may be more concerned as to the preservation of records for research purposes, but if destruction of records is suggested, it may be helpful to them to draw local managers' attention to the details of the Department of Health recommendations.

Dr A. R. M. FREEMAN  
*Secretary, Public Policy Committee*

## The College Library

### *Historical records*

The Library has recently finished the input of information from the Parliamentary and Education Committees of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association onto the Archives Database. The series of Education Committee meeting minute books is complete and runs from 1893–1971. However, the series of Parliamentary Committee meeting minute books runs only from 1906–1966 although the Committee is known to have existed both before and after these dates. If anyone has any suggestions for possible whereabouts of other minute books of this committee (which was sometimes called the Lunacy Legislation Committee or Lunacy Legislation Watch Committee) please will they tell one of the Library staff.

### *A new booklist*

*List of Books Suitable for a Psychiatric Library 1989–90* is now available. It includes books which have received a favourable review in the British psychiatric press between July 1989 and December 1990. It is obtainable from the College Publications Department, price £2.00.

### *College policy documents*

A printed register of College policy documents for 1990 has been compiled and is available from the Library.