

## COST OF BENEFITS

The following is a statement of the expenditure on the various classes of benefits during the year, the figures for the previous year being shown in parentheses :—

Maternity benefits—					£	
Public hospitals	..	..	..	..	133,946	
Private hospitals	..	..	..	..	210,675	
Medical practitioners' fees	..	..	..	..	158,409	
Mileage fees, medical practitioners	..	..	..	..	5,647	
Obstetrical nurses	..	..	..	..	11,117	
St. Helens hospitals	..	..	..	..	10,940	
					<u>£530,734</u>	(£513,939)
Medical benefits—					£	
Capitation fees	..	..	..	..	42,400	
General medical services	..	..	..	..	1,161,326	
Special arrangements	..	..	..	..	23,855	
Mileage fees, medical practitioners	..	..	..	..	59,442	
					<u>£1,287,023</u>	(£1,179,331)
Hospital benefits—					£	
Treatment in public hospitals	..	..	..	..	1,689,233	
Out-patient treatment	..	..	..	..	83,412	
Private hospitals	..	..	..	..	259,489	
Treatment in approved institutions	..	..	..	..	56,504	
Mental hospitals	..	..	..	..	187,942	
Other institutions	..	..	..	..	54,120	
					<u>£2,330,700</u>	(£2,158,146)
Pharmaceutical benefits—					£	
Chemists	..	..	..	..	933,490	
Medical practitioners	..	..	..	..	6,231	
Institutions	..	..	..	..	40,516	
					<u>£980,237</u>	(£762,198)
Supplementary benefits—					£	
Radiological services	..	..	..	..	128,842	
Massage	..	..	..	..	32,152	
Nursing	..	..	..	..	7,717	
Specialists	..	..	..	..	1,324	
					<u>£170,035</u>	(£137,823)
Gross expenditure					£	
	..	..	..	..	5,298,729	
Less credits-in-aid—					£	
Hospital benefits	..	..	..	..	64,012	
Supplementary benefits	..	..	..	..	3	
					<u>64,015</u>	
Net total	..	..	..	..	<u>£5,234,714</u>	

## PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFITS

The cost of this benefit continues to increase, and represents an expenditure of 12s. 3d. per head of the population, as against 9s. per head in the previous year, exclusive of the medicines supplied to in-patients of public hospitals. Part of the increased amount is due to the same cause as operated in the previous year—viz., the extensions of the Drug Tariff, following extensions of the British Pharmacopœia and British Pharmaceutical Codex, and the increase in costs of drugs. Apart from these two factors, the feature which has been in evidence since the inception of the pharmaceutical benefits—viz., the rise in the actual number of prescriptions—is still very marked. This rise has occurred despite any apparent deterioration in general health, and certainly without any increase in population, and is very disquieting. During the year the prescription frequency per head of population was 2·8.

Cases of unnecessary, irregular, and expensive prescribing were brought to the attention of the Advisory Committee, and appropriate action taken on the Committee's recommendation. Disciplinary action has been necessary against certain contractors because of irregularities in connection with the supply of medicines.

Pricing Office procedure was very difficult during the year owing to the impossibility of obtaining suitable and sufficient staff. The position has been very acute in some districts, and has resulted in considerable delay in the adjustment of final payments to contractors. It is possible that staff difficulties will ease considerably during the ensuing year.