The English Poor Laws were a system of poor relief which existed in England and Wales that. More importantly, the Act helped to publicise the idea of establishing workhouses to a national had been established in England and Wales, housing almost 100,000 paupers. Marshall, J. D. The Old Poor Law, 1795–1834. Provision for the Relief of the Poor in Manchester, 1754-1826 - Google Books Result Society and Pauperism: English Ideas on Poor Relief, 1795-1834, by J. R. Poynter Canadian Journal of History, 52, pp. 116–117