Book Reviews

Dementia and Well-Being: Possibilities and Challenges
Cook, A.
Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2008, pp.90, ISBN: 978-1-903765-76-0, £14.50, (pbk.)

Over the years we have gradually raised our sights about dementia. We have moved from seeing it as the inevitable decrepitude of old age or the personal tragedy of inevitable decline into mute, incontinent helplessness. We have even moved on from the relatively benign paternalistic view of it being simply a 'problem' in which its 'sufferers' require 'services'. Several factors have contributed to this, including earlier diagnosis, which means that more cases are identified with milder states of impairment, and a recognition that the natural history of dementia is over several years, that is, over a significant proportion of an individual's adult life. Through the work of Tom Kitwood (1997) and others, we understand how the social response to people with dementia can compound their difficulties and render people more handicapped and isolated than they need otherwise be.

The situation of people with dementia can be assessed in various ways, from the measurement of symptoms and impaired functions, through their preserved abilities, to consideration of their quality of life. However, argues Ailsa Cook in this slim volume, even quality of life is not really the test of how well society is responding to the challenge of dementia. Quality of life is externally assessed, whereas what really matters is well-being – the appraisal of a person's life drawn entirely from their perspective. This approach brings dementia into line with work in the field of other disabling conditions, where well-being is more commonly accepted as being the best measure of outcomes. Putting well-being at the centre has two major implications: first,

it is not simply a matter of providing services for people with dementia – such services must genuinely place the person with dementia at the heart of their own individual plan; and, second, whether the goals of policies have been attained can only truly be ascertained by seeking the views of people with dementia themselves.

Ailsa Cook, whose own research has been based on work with care home residents with dementia, examines the degree to which health and social policy addresses dementia in general and the question of well-being in particular. Cook concentrates on England and Scotland, and she was right up-to-date at the time of publication, including the draft *English National Dementia Strategy*. She examines the relevant programmes of policy to determine how likely they are to affect the well-being of people with dementia in relation to four areas: health, independence, choice and control, and social inclusion. This analysis forms the main content of the book.

The first major finding is that dementia has, until relatively recently, been almost totally ignored in policy, for two main reasons: uncertainty as to whether it is a mental health or an older people's issue, and a generally pessimistic attitude to dementia and its outlook. Fortunately, the latter has been challenged, by campaigners such as the Alzheimer's Society and more recent policy does pay greater attention to dementia.

As regards the specific components of well-being discussed in the book, Cook finds that health services generally have let people with dementia down, and that things are far from well with promoting independence, choice and control, and social inclusion. She welcomes initiatives (such as the National Dementia Strategy) that make specific proposals, though, of course, resource issues

may limit what is actually achieved. Cautious optimism is probably the most appropriate mood at present. There is an opportunity for change, though many challenges remain, such as the difficulty in keeping any issue at the top of the list of competing public priorities, or the difficulties in ensuring true partnership working across organisational boundaries. If policy is to improve the well-being of people with dementia, we must ensure that future policies are inclusive and that the views of people with dementia are sought at every opportunity.

This book is commendably brief and makes its points clearly. If there are weaknesses, they are perhaps inevitable, given the main themes. Whether it is entirely appropriate to reject a 'medical model' of a condition that is the result of degenerative brain changes is questionable. After all, we do not do so for other chronic disabling illnesses such as diabetes or arthritis so, although there is a rhetorical point to be made, there remains a biological component to dementia. Similarly, although people with dementia certainly should not be presumed to be incapable of making decisions, nonetheless many people with moderate to severe dementia do lack capacity for major decisions and will require such choices to be made on their behalf. However, the book provides a stimulating discussion of the current policy context and achieves its aims of informing the reader and provoking further thought and discussion.

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Reference
Kitwood, T. (1997) *Dementia Reconsidered: The Person Comes First (Rethinking Ageing),* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Good Practice in the Law and Safeguarding Adults
Pritchard, J. (ed.)
London: Jessica Kingsley, 2009, pp.255, ISBN: 9781843109372, £19.99 (pbk.)

This book sets out to provide an up-to-date summary of the legislative framework, developments and best practice relevant to the area of adult protection work in England, Wales and Scotland. It comprises twelve chapters written by a diverse range of authors, each taking a particular aspect of safeguarding.

Chapter One is *A Review of Relevant Legislation in Adult Protection* and is co-authored by Simon Leslie and the editor, Jacki Pritchard. As Pritchard says in the *Introduction*, "the legal framework is a huge animal and I do not expect any reader to be an expert after reading this book" (p.13). Nevertheless, this chapter provides an accessible outline of the key pieces of legislation with which practitioners should currently be familiar.

Chapter Two, by Kathryn Mackay, is specifically on the *Scottish Legislative Framework for Supporting and Protecting Adults*. Chapter Three, *How the Police Investigate Crimes Against Vulnerable Adults*, is written anonymously by a police officer. This is a really useful chapter with much practical advice. It contains an excellent four-part case study with accompanying questions and suggested answers.

Chapter Four, by Kathryn Stone, is entitled *Criminal Justice and Vulnerable Adults: Who Does What?* Its strength lies in the basic and practical way the reader is taken through its subject matter. As such, it would be very useful to a range of practitioners. Stone also includes case studies which, although informative, I found rather too simplified to be of much use. Chapter Five, by Simon Leslie, is on *Confidentiality and Information Sharing*. As with the previous

chapter, scenarios are included for illustrative purposes. However, these too were also rather sketchy to be of much use. Generally though, the chapter is useful and informative. It contains both a good summary of the law about information-sharing and a checklist of good practice points.

Chapter Six, *The Vulnerable Adult and the Mental Capacity Act 2005,* is authored by David Hewitt who, apart from outlining how the Act might be used to protect vulnerable adults, asks "whether the act might itself increase abuse" (p.105). Compared to other chapters, this twin focus, with its polemical dimension, makes for a more confusing read. The writer has a rather clipped writing style which, together with the unresolved issue of whether the Act might increase abuse, impedes rather than illuminates understanding. It would have been better to have concentrated on elucidating the Mental Capacity Act 2005. Chapter Seven, by contrast, *Capacity and Financial Abuse* by Penny Letts, is more straightforwardly informative and all the more effective for that.

Chapter Eight, *The Role of Advocacy and the Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) in Adult Protection Work,* is by Rob Harris. Whilst being informative about advocacy in general and IMCAs in particular, Harris is possibly guilty of taking too rosy a view both of how much independent advocacy provision there will be in the future and the extent to which it is the answer to all the issues posed by capacity problems. Continuing with the IMCA theme, Chapter Nine, *Being an IMCA: Experiences in Adult Protection Proceedings* by Teresa Gorczynska, typifies a strength of the book – the degree to which it reflects and is informed by the real world of practice. Several good insights into the work of IMCAs are provided. Unfortunately, this chapter looks as if it has been badly proof-read which impedes understanding at times.

Chapter Ten, *The Commission for Social Care Inspection's Legal Powers: What it Can and Cannot Do,* is by Adrian Hughes who does a good job of illuminating where CSCI may or may not fit into safeguarding. He informs us that it is "not a complaints investigation body and no provision in the legislation is made for this" (p.175). This type of clarification, of which there is much in the chapter, is really useful for practitioners to know. The only criticism I would have is that the case study is rather long and confusingly written. Hughes should also have mentioned the merging of CSCI into the Care Quality Commission in 2009.

Chapter Eleven, by Steve Kirkpatrick, is titled *My Use of the Law in Protecting Vulnerable Adults: from Police Officer to Chief Executive of a Care Provider.* Whilst it is largely anecdotal, it is also candid and reflective and therefore provides the reader with many relevant and useful insights. Not least of these, is just how important it is for practitioners to know the law properly. Kirkpatrick is also a strong advocate of creating specialist police units trained in the use of video interviewing. The author could have identified specific learning points over and above his narrative but, that said, I found this chapter of great relevance to the overall safeguarding discussion.

The final chapter, *Reflections on Practice*, written by the editor, presents Pritchard's own reflections and those of seven others; ranging from a District Judge (on honour-based violence and forced marriage) to a Detective Constable and Adult Protection Co-ordinators. Inevitably some of these are more effective than others. However, overall, the book, whilst being quite a 'mixed bag', offers much that is useful and of interest to any of us interested in safeguarding vulnerable adults.

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Book Reviews Editor

The Integrated Children's System: Enhancing Social Work and Inter-Agency Practice
Cleaver, H., Walker, S., Scott, J., Cleaver, D., Rose, W., Ward, H. & Pithouse, A.
London & Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2008, pp.224,
ISBN: 9781843109440, £35.00 (pbk.)

This book is both an account of developmental processes of the Integrated Children's System (ICS) pilot scheme prior to its national roll-out and an evaluation of the extent to which it met its objectives of enhancing social work practice through more systematic collation of information and improved decision-making. The four authorities – an English Shire county, a London Borough, a Welsh Local Authority and a unitary authority in England - were matched by four teams drawn from four Universities under the leadership of Royal Holloway, University of London.

After an introductory chapter that presents an account of the developing policy context that underpins practice in child care, the authors provide a detailed series of chapters that examine the process of implementation of ICS and the impact of its introduction on practice in a number of significant areas – on recording (Chapter Three); on social workers' perceptions of ICS (Chapter Four); on inter-agency working (Chapter Five), although this appears as an afterthought and a response to the circular *Every Child Matters*; on the extent to which it involves children and young people (Chapter Six), and on the use of IT (Chapter Seven). As is customary, the final chapter ends with a series of conclusions and recommendations although many of these have been prefigured in the executive conclusions that end each of the previous chapters. Finally, the authors have added an appendix that describes the aims and methods employed in the research.

The research is painstaking, thorough and detailed as one might expect from the past records of the authors. It is also ethically honest in that it does not hide the degree of incompleteness of much of the data that they had to use as the agencies struggled to cope with the introduction of ICS and failed to meet the expected implementation times thus vitiating the planned before and after evaluations of the changes in practice. Perhaps the most disappointing example, from the perspective of practice and to the frustration of the researchers, can be seen in the findings on the impact of the change on children and young people when only one agency provided the responses of looked-after young people to a questionnaire on their participation in plans and reviews.

The strength of the book lies in the way it highlights a series of tensions and issues in relation to social work practice, in the perceptions of social workers and their ability/inability to make effective use of the positives in this recording system, and of the technical problems surrounding the introduction of IT systems. The recommendations provide suggestions on how these aspects might be dealt with in order to facilitate the introduction of ICS but these all require considerable expense as well as time to enthuse and motivate staff. It will also require software development that is tightly specified rather than left to the technical experts. All this is costly. One definite consequence arising from the experience of all the agencies is that social workers will be spending more time at the computer.

However, as the researchers make clear, there needs to be a transformational shift in the perceptions of the social workers and managers on the use of computers so that the resource potential is exploited as a practice as well as a management tool as opposed to being disparaged as a data-entering chore.

The intention behind the introduction of ICS, as with all recording systems, is to enhance practice and provide better

outcomes for children. The book, which describes the development up to 2005, is a testament to the effort and investment of the researchers and the workers in the pilot agencies, but the outcomes, even at that stage, appear problematic with relatively few improvements evident in the impact on practice although all involved appear to acknowledge the system's potential.

The question remains as to whether ICS will achieve this aim? The evidence to date is not positive. The record of large scale government computer initiatives generally, and the particular outcome that followed the introduction of such systems in the social work field, does not make for reassurance (Colombi, 1994).

Moreover, a recent report on the experience of four local authorities, two Welsh and two English, using ICS between 2004 and 2006, indicates that practitioners still experience frustration at the shortcomings of the system (Bell, 2008). It would be a somewhat ironic postscript to the philosophy behind the attempt to improve practice if, despite the increased time social workers spend in entering information on the record, the outcome was a lessening of effective inter-agency communication and communication between worker and children and families.

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References
Bell, M. (2008) 'Put on ICS: research finds disquiet with ICS', *Community Care,* 5th June.

Colombi, D. (1994) *The Probation Service and Information Technology*, Aldershot: Ashgate.

Educating Difficult Adolescents: Effective Education for Children in Public Care or with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
Berridge D., Dance C., Beecham J. & Field S. *London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2008, pp.224, ISBN: 9781843106814, £25 (pbk.)*

This book describes a sizeable piece of research undertaken as part of a government funded initiative *Quality Protects* (Department of Health, 1998). The premise for the research is the undeniable constancy of poor educational performance amongst the cohort of young people who find themselves within the public care of a local authority. The authors seek to explore the reasons for this and to consider ways to improve that performance. They have taken a sample of 'difficult to manage' young people from three local authorities: 'metro', 'borough' and 'county'. The research seeks to compare the experiences of young people placed either in foster care and children's homes or attending a residential school for young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). It provides a comprehensive review of the experiences of those students based upon qualitative and quantitative data collected at the beginning and end of a nine-month period. It includes interviews with social workers and carers as well as the young people themselves. That data is supplemented by analyses of central government statistics and local documentation, together with material from interviews with local authority 'managers'.

The research is very clearly presented and the methodology is well explained. There is a mass of data regarding the nature of care provided to the young people presented in a fairly accessible fashion. It is always valuable for practitioners and managers to read about, and reflect upon, real experiences of real young people. Managers will find the section on costs of differing support packages particularly informative. However, although the title refers to

'Effective Education for Children in Public Care', there is little here about what the effective education might look like. The practitioner is not presented with any 'tips' or guidance in terms of working successfully with difficult to manage young people.

Reading as a practitioner, I struggled to understand how the group of young people attending residential SEBD provision was similar for research purposes to those young people living in the care of a local authority. In fact, the researchers acknowledge that there are significant differences between the groups. Equally, I struggled with the notion that a reduction in permanent exclusions indicates improved practice. The researchers appear very 'savvy' elsewhere in understanding that any target-led culture leads to misrepresentation of data, yet they do not appear to appreciate that reduction in permanent exclusion figures is almost inevitably achieved through movement 'out of school' simply being 're-titled' as, for example, 'managed move'.

Whilst some of the conclusions drawn appear fairly obvious, for example, "changing placement was associated with lower levels of general happiness (p.180)", the material is, nevertheless, worth reading from a practitioner's point of view if it raises awareness of the students' perspective. For managers, it provides solid information regarding the costs of different approaches. Finally, any research that reaches the conclusion that "what seems more important are the attributes of the particular individuals with whom the young person lives and the quality of experience they offer" (p.182) is to be applauded. In other words, positive, caring, appropriate relationships sit at the heart of all work with young people, but that being the case, researching 'systems' might seem of lesser importance!

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Reference

Department of Health (1998) *Quality Protects: Framework for Action,* London: The Stationery Office.

Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Young People
Stafford, A. & Vincent, S.
Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2008, pp.88, ISBN: 978-1-903765-69-2, £13.50 (pbk.)

This short book gives a well-written summary of the development of child welfare policy since the 1950s. Its primary focus is on Scottish policy and practice and so it fills a gap in the literature which tends to discuss the system in England with only passing reference to the other three countries of the United Kingdom. Since we can expect devolution to increase the divergence between Scottish and English policies, this book sets a good example. There are, of course, many similarities between the two countries but the differences are also brought out. For example, the recommendations of the Kilbrandon Report in 1964 differed substantially from the equivalent Seebohm Report in England, especially in relation to service provision for young offenders.

The book ends with an overview of current policy and the ambitious plans of reform. The breadth of the reform is well communicated, explaining the underlying principles and goals as well as the practical changes required. There is also coverage of related reforms, such as policies relating to parental substance misuse and domestic abuse.

This book provides a very good description of policy and practice but is disappointing at

the level of critique. The authors set out the perennial tensions in child welfare between protecting children and supporting families. They report the failure of earlier policies to achieve their goals. They describe the powerful influence on service development of a few key inquiries into children's deaths from abuse or neglect, and mention how this might have distorted policies. However, while the authors briefly report the complex arguments of critics such as Nigel Parton and Harry Ferguson, they do not attempt to engage directly in the debates themselves.

This is particularly frustrating in Chapter Five which deals with the reforms since 2000. The authors explain how the key priorities for reform are increasing early intervention to meet the needs of children and promoting the integration of services and inter-agency working. No one would want to reject the high ideals behind the reforms but more attention could have been given to the limited evidence base for the reforms. The Scottish Executive commissioned a review of the evidence for integrating children's services that concluded that there was limited evidence that it had a positive impact on outcomes such as levels of health or achievement[1]. Also, there is no clear reason for supposing that the social pressures that have pushed the system into prioritising child protection have been eradicated and, hence, they are likely to continue to act as a counterweight to efforts to shift towards a more preventive approach.

This book is a good text for anyone wanting a basic primer on Scottish children's policy but will disappoint anyone wanting to engage critically with the long-standing difficulties societies have experienced in finding a balance between supporting and policing families to maximise children's safety and welfare. Throughout the UK, there have been a series of idealistic and ambitious reforms of children's services since 1948, all of which have achieved some good progress but also left some problems unresolved. Today's reforms are possibly the most ambitious of all but they need to be critically appraised and applied in order to maximise the chances of achieving the hoped-for improvements for children.

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Footnote
[1.] Brown, K. & White, K. (2006) *Exploring the Evidence Base for Integrated Children's Services,* Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.