

the middle classes except where they were required to be their servants. In a cruel irony, while many were placed in the Schools for truancy, they received little in the way of education and were placed on leaving as unskilled farm workers or domestic servants.

The system survived because of the complicity of the State. This was in part neglect; a failure to inspect, monitor and enforce guidelines. Its deeper origins however are in the conception of the Irish State. The State conceived itself as minimalist. The task of caring for the vulnerable was understood as the responsibility of the Church and the family. It is only in the past decade that the Irish State has come to accept that its children may be failed by both their families and the Church, and the State may have to take active responsibility for their care.

This book is that rare achievement, a work of scholarship written for a popular audience. It will find an audience amongst those with an historical interest and those interested in the relationship between church and State. It has also some important lessons for those outside Ireland working in out-of-home care and those managing or regulating it.

Wherever there is vulnerability there will be those willing to exploit it, whether for profit, for personal gratification or out of sheer maliciousness. This is true of the care of the young, the elderly and those with a disability. One abiding rationale for the State is the protection of the vulnerable. Vigilance by the State is not sufficient however to ensure safety in care. It must be expressed in processes, which establish standards and which systematically monitor performance against them.

Abusive practice proliferates in closed systems. Raftery and O'Sullivan quote Irish playwright Patricia Burke Brogan, herself formerly a Mercy Sisters novice, who left the Congregation in protest at the treatment of women in the Order's laundries:

Total unquestioning obedience like that is a very dangerous concept. If you close your mind and you don't allow questions to be asked, the danger is very great that abuse of that power can happen.

The best defence against disturbed practices is transparency. The resistance by the managers of Ireland's Industrial Schools to proposed 'external visitors' is instructive.

When care is given over to the ignorant, the untrained or the basely motivated, its subjects are at risk. There is a lesson here for the would-be privatisers of contemporary services. Good care requires sustained attention over time by a committed and well-trained workforce. It cannot be purchased as dehumanised service units.

It is fashionable these days to decry deinstitutionalisation as the cynical cost cutting of economic liberalism. There is some merit in this view; services which are poorly resourced and managed are a poor alternative. We should not lose sight, however, of the fact that the old institutions for the care of children, the intellectually disabled and the mentally ill were evil places – not because the people who worked there and managed them were evil (though Raftery and O'Sullivan give many examples of where this was the case), but because of the imbalance of power that was their hallmark. They had as their foundation the power of carers over the cared for, often with tragic effect.

The final word lies with the survivors of Ireland's Industrial Schools. Ed speaks of his time at St Joseph's Industrial School in Kilkenny:

I cried when they brought me back to St Joseph's, to all that pain and abuse and torment. I wanted to stay in prison, but they wouldn't let me. I have no happy memories of my childhood. I don't remember a single good day.

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Supporting parents of teenagers: A handbook for professionals

John Coleman and Debi Roker (eds)

Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London, 2001. 223 pages

This book would be a very useful addition to the library of workers with young people or with the families of young people. It is intended as a practice tool for professionals but it also serves to draw together in an economical and readable way the dramatic movement that has occurred in Britain in recent years in the area of parenting support. The term 'parenting support' is used generically to cover a range of activities *which offer learning opportunities* (17) to parents dealing with the issues that arise as children move through adolescence to adulthood. One of the insights the book offers is the appreciation that during the transition young people may be expressing either/or, or both, the child and the adult within them. The parent needs to negotiate the variations without

being driven to coercive over-reactions or giving up. Changes in society have presented additional challenges and some understandings have been reached about what forms of parenting reduce the likelihood of problems and improve longer term outcomes for their children.

John Coleman and Debi Roker are respectively Director and Assistant Director of the Trust for the Study of Adolescence which for many years has been conducting useful research with young people, and producing literature and training material of considerable substance. This book is no exception and has drawn together contributions based, firstly, on a strong appreciation of the diversity of young people and of parents, and the complexity of normal experience and

behaviour [Coleman's earlier work on a focal theory of development (Coleman & Hendry 1999) has been helpful for some time in this respect]; and, secondly, research and practice emanating from the youth justice, cultural diversity, health and disability, and education fields which serve to illustrate the various approaches to parent support discussed in the book.

It begins however with a picture of current context and policy issues and dilemmas in Britain which include the legislative moves to make parents more responsible for the behaviour of their children. Fortunately much of this appears to have moved on somewhat from simply imposing penalties on parents for their children's delinquencies and trancies, etc, to court requirements for parents to participate in parenting programs. These factors have been drivers for some of the accelerated development of parent support which includes, according to one of the models referred to in the book, *empowerment, promotion and prevention*. Other chapters include a discussion of the needs of teenagers and of parents which draws on significant research; supporting black and minority ethnic teenagers and their parents; parenting and youth crime; working with parents in the youth justice context; providing support through telephone help lines; using the parent adviser model to support parents of teenagers; setting up a parenting teenagers group; schools as a context for working with parents; professional development in the parenting context; and, the parenting of teenagers: present and future. Not all parents need or want the same kind of support. Some will be helped by universal health promotion initiatives or the

opportunity to take written material or videos home, others will gain from participation in group activities at various levels. Telephone help lines, web sites, parent advisers and comprehensive support or therapeutic programs and professional counsellors are all potentially useful. The point is made that research and evaluation of what works is important and that evaluation should distinguish between outcomes, such as parents' enjoyment of a project, the knowledge they gain from it (about self, parenting and adolescent development), their level of confidence, their feelings of support and changes in their behaviour, their relationships and their teenager's behaviour (204).

The book touches many issues which would be of interest to both the youth field and the parenting and family support fields in Australia. Some of the policy related issues, which include the role of government and the place of chronological age in defining rights and responsibilities, provide an alert to some of the growing pressures here as well.

REFERENCE

Coleman, J. & Hendry, L. (1999) *The nature of adolescence*, 3rd edition, London: Routledge.

Reviewed by:

Lloyd Owen
Editor, Children Australia

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

The following two publications would be of particular interest to those working with autism spectrum disorders.

These are children's story books which, in addition to being a good read for children, are a valuable teaching tool to aid in the understanding of children, parents and workers dealing with Asperger's Syndrome:

- 📖 *Blue Bottle Mystery: An Asperger Adventure*
Author: Kathy Hoopmann
Publisher: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London, 2000
- 📖 *Of Mice and Aliens: An Asperger Adventure*
Author: Kathy Hoopmann
Publisher: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London, 2001

Further information can be obtained from the publisher (www.jkp.com).