

- Race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and disability in family placements
- Attachment, therapeutic help and life story work.

Each chapter is divided into further useful sections – for example, the chapter on adoption and permanent foster care is divided into permanence; infant adoption; contact; birth family; search and reunion; support services; and books for children and parents/carers.

The book also contains author and title indexes for all entries.

Reviewed by:  
Dr Cas O'Neill

### RELATIVE BENEFITS ... PLACING CHILDREN IN KINSHIP CARE

Bob Broad and Alison Skinner

BAAF, 2005

**K**inship care placements are steadily increasing in the UK as they are in Australia (see [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au), Child Protection 2004-05, for the latest Australian statistics). I am currently undertaking research in Victoria with kin and kin carers and young people – and this book confirms many of my local findings, particularly those around finances; loss of independence for carers; the complexity of contact between children, birth parents and carers; and the need for different kinds of support.

*Relative Benefits* is aimed at professionals. It reviews the literature, summarises the messages from research and looks at the legal framework for kinship care in the UK. It then goes on to cover policy and practice issues; family support (including financial support); family relationships and contact; health support; education; and therapeutic work with kinship care families. It is firmly based in Bob Broad's research and is clearly concerned for the wellbeing of kinship carers and children. For example, the authors state:

All the kinship care research undertaken in the UK and USA indicates that kinship carers are materially disadvantaged and are in need of, and do not receive enough, support services (p.46).

One of the things I really like about this book is the way in which research findings, professional practice and consumer views are an intrinsic part of each chapter, with sections in each broad area entitled:

- 'Good practice principles'
- 'Kinship carers: what they think', with examples from the authors' research in the area.
- 'Local authority examples' – how different Local Authorities handle the complexity of their work in this area.

For example, in the chapter on contact between child and birth parents, one of the 'good practice recommendations' states:

Be aware that when kinship care grandparents ask for help from social services, they are likely to be in priority need, given the many deterrents which may prevent them making this request earlier, and should be responded to quickly (p. 75).

Similarly, in the chapter on 'support structures', the authors share a local authority's approach to devising a 'support plan', at the same time stressing the need for at least six monthly reviews of the plan (p. 47).

Australian professionals are likely to find particularly useful the sections on assessment:

- The discussion of why kinship care assessment is intrinsically different to foster care assessment (p. 23)
- Issues in assessing grandparents (pp. 29-32)
- Assessment of risk and protective factors (p. 40)

There are also good discussions on the issues around family group conferences (p. 25 and Appendix A) and working with kinship care families in therapy.

There is very little published research on kinship care in Australia, which makes this book both timely and useful.

Reviewed by:  
Dr Cas O'Neill

### ONE OF THE FAMILY ... A HANDBOOK FOR KINSHIP CARERS

Hedi Argent

BAAF, 2005

Reviewed in conjunction with:

#### WHEN THE CHILDREN ARRIVE

Mirabel Foundation, 2003  
([www.mirabelfoundation.com](http://www.mirabelfoundation.com))

*One of the family* is a comprehensive small book aimed at kinship carers and those who are considering becoming carers. I read it in conjunction with the excellent local resource book for carers *When the children arrive*, published in 2003 by the Mirabel Foundation in Victoria. While the two books cover some of the same ground, they also have some different emphases (as well as legal information which is specific to each country) and kinship carers would be well served by having access to both.

*One of the family* covers the reasons why children may need kinship care, the pros and cons of kinship care, the emotional roller coaster of becoming a carer in this way, children's needs and behaviours, and the kinds of support which carers are eligible for and may need.

There are several important issues covered in this book that are not covered in the Mirabel book. *One of the family*:

- emphasises in several parts of the book that kinship care is a choice, that it is fine for potential carers to decide *not* to care full time for children, and that there are many ways, apart from full time care, to support children.
- explains why carers are assessed and what the assessment process entails.
- covers the process of Family Group Conferences and how these can be helpful.

I also really liked the last small chapter entitled 'And finally ... good advice' (p. 80). It is a pithy list of messages from kinship carers – with gems such as:

- 'Don't do it if you're not confident or wholly committed. Don't do it just to keep the family happy.'
- 'Don't be a martyr: the child will benefit if you look after yourself.'
- 'Don't forget who the parents are: treat the children as your own, but never forget that they're not.'
- 'If you're going to play football at the weekends, expect to feel knackered.'

The Mirabel book '*When the children arrive*' has more 'how to' information than the BAAF book – for example:

- 'What do I tell children who have lost their parents to a drug overdose?'
- 'Should I take the children to visit their parents in prison?'
- 'Should I take the children to the funeral?'

In summary, both of these small books are excellent resources.

Reviewed by:  
Dr Cas O'Neill

## COULD YOU BE MY PARENT? ... ADOPTION AND FOSTERING STORIES

Edited by Leonie Sturge-Moore

BAAF, 2005

This very accessible book is a compilation of articles from *Be My Parent?*, the British Association for Adoption and Fostering's family-finding newspaper, which is published once a month. The newspaper has photos and short profiles of children waiting for a family, together with articles, interviews, news and background information on adoption and fostering.

The practical 'feel' of *Could you be my parent?* is summed up with statements such as:

- 'Wherever you are along the adoption and fostering journey, we hope that you will find food for thought in this book' (p. ix)
- 'Adoption and long-term fostering are, in essence, about bringing up other people's children' (p. 2)
- '(The children's) early experiences may have left them deeply unsettled, expressing their hurt and vulnerability through difficult behaviour' (p. 3).

The articles are generally brief, usually not much more than 1-2 pages, and include shorter pieces written by children and young people. The book is easy to dip in and out of, and presents negatives as well as positives. An index lists articles by subject area – for example:

- Adding to an existing family
- Adopting again
- Contact with birth family
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Assessment
- Gay and lesbian families
- Single carer families

*Could you be my parent?* is probably most useful for families who are thinking about foster care and adoption, rather than for families who are already experienced caregivers.

Reviewed by:  
Dr Cas O'Neill

BAAF books are available from: British Association for Adoption and Fostering (UK)

Tel: (0011 44) 20 7593 2072 Fax: (0011 44) 20 7593 2001 Email: mail@baaf.org.uk

Books can also be ordered through the BAAF website: www.baaf.org.uk

Many BAAF books are also available from St Luke's Innovative Resources in Victoria

Tel: (03) 5442 0500 Fax: (03) 5442 0555 Email: stlukeir@stlukes.org.au Website: www.stlukes.org.au/resources