

## Book reviews

### EVERY CHILD IS SPECIAL: PLACING DISABLED CHILDREN FOR PERMANENCE

Jennifer Cousins, BAAF, 2006

The purpose of *Every child is special* (one of the BAAF Good Practice Guides) is to draw together available research and the practice experience of social workers, other professionals and foster carers to assist anyone involved with securing permanent families for children with a range of disabilities. This comprehensive guide highlights the changes which are necessary if more disabled children are to have the security of a permanent family.

This guide begins with an overview of current organisational models of disability services in the UK, definitions of disability and clarification of terms and language, such as 'disabled' children, children 'in need', children needing to be 'looked after', 'special needs' and short term care. There is acknowledgment of the problems posed by definitions and terminology and the difficulty that this poses for research and policy.

Although the focus in the early chapters is on UK services, funding and research programs, there are many similarities, and therefore relevance, to the Australian context.

A clear and thorough examination is provided of all areas of relevance to the placement of children with disabilities. For example:

- Recruitment and assessment of families
- Profiling and featuring children
- Assessing and communicating with children
- Recruiting and assessing families and making links
- Planning permanence
- Moving in
- Supporting placements
- Contact with birth families

This material contains excellent practical and theoretical advice for both workers and carers and, therefore, provides information which develops skills and confidence. I would therefore recommend this book as a resource for anyone seeking information about communicating with, caring for, and placing, children with disabilities.

Reviewed by:

Pauline Peile  
Senior Counsellor (retired)  
Dept. of Human Services  
Adoption & Family Records Service

### IN SEARCH OF BELONGING: REFLECTIONS BY TRANSRACIALLY ADOPTED PEOPLE

Perlita Harris (ed.), BAAF, 2006

*In search of belonging* is an anthology of the personal accounts of transracially adopted people in the UK. As such, it presents a roller coaster of the emotions experienced growing up in families where no one looks like you, in a country where most families don't look like yours!

The book is divided into thematic sections, which cover areas such as separation and loss, childhood experiences, searching for identity and reconnection with birth families. The contributors are 57 adoptees, ranging in age from six to 56, who share their stories and feelings, expressed through poetry, art and autobiography. Some of the contributors also provide practical advice, such as coping with racism, searching for information, and help with travel plans to return to country of birth.

The overwhelming thread is of sadness and the search for belonging. Many of the stories are heart wrenching, some uplifting and others just plain sad, but throughout the book there are many insights for adoptive parents and adoptees to incorporate into their lives. For adoptive parents the most important of these is that being part of a loving family is not necessarily enough, as the pain of separation is very deep.

*In search of belonging* is another important book for the intercountry adoption community to digest and reflect on. For those who have adopted a child from another country, I see this book as mandatory reading. Furthermore, this collection of stories has relevance for anyone who seeks to understand what it is like for those who live with the complex realities of intercountry adoption through their lives.

Reviewed by:

Gail Scowcroft  
Adoptive parent

These reviews have been written by members of the Post Placement Support Service (Vic) Inc ([www.ppss.org.au](http://www.ppss.org.au)), an organisation which has been established to provide early intervention support and training to anyone who has a personal or professional connection with permanent care, adoption, long term foster care and kinship care.

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<[www.stlukes.org.au/resources](http://www.stlukes.org.au/resources)>