

BOOK REVIEWS

Therapeutic Residential Care for Children and Young People: An Attachment and Trauma-Informed Model For Practice

Susan Barton, Rudy Gonzalez & Patrick Tomlinson. (2011). London, England: Jessica Kingsley, ISBN 978 1 84905 255 9 (paperback), 287 pp.

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This book reports on the therapeutic model of care that has been developed by the Lighthouse Foundation in Australia. In doing so, the theoretical underpinnings of this model are articulated and how this gets translated into day-to-day care is described.

Much of the theory in this book is not new. This is particularly true of chapter 1 in which the importance of theory is emphasised and Freudian concepts such as transference, projective identification and splitting are explained. Reference is also made to the work of the British analysts David Winnicott, John Bowlby, Melanie Klein and Isabel Menzies. In addition, the work of Barbara Docker-Drysdale and Richard Balbernie at the Cotswold Community in England gets mentioned with approval.

What is new is the attempt, in chapter 2, to integrate into these perspectives neurobiological information; especially the work of Bruce Perry in regard to the effect of early trauma on brain development.

The book — in chapters 3 to 8 — usefully describes in detail the day-to-day working of this model of care and rightly examines the impact on staff of this way of working. Emphasis is also placed on the importance of the physical environment and daily routines as they reinforce the therapeutic endeavour. The final chapters, 9 and 10, chart the requirements for aftercare and the importance of outcome measures as a means of externally verifying the therapeutic effectiveness of the model.

The key question about this model is, can it be replicated and at what cost? Firstly, it is clear that Susan Barton's life-long commitment to the Lighthouse Foundation is a key factor that has made the emergence of this model of care possible. In addition, Rudy Gonzalez and Patrick Tomlinson are also clearly devoted to this model of care that appears to be influenced by Tomlinson's earlier experience at the Cotswold Community.

The chances of assembling a leadership team of this quality with a lifetime dedication to this model of care in the context of government services has to be almost zero. It is more possible for such a model of care to be developed in the nongovernment sector, as the Lighthouse Foundation has shown, but even then large-scale, nongovernment agencies with a diverse range of services may well find the organisational protection that such a model of care needs, difficult to provide. In fact, this model of care is only likely to be possible when there is an independent foundation, like the Lighthouse Foundation, that is able to act as a sponsor.

In conclusion, the book arrived almost at the same time as the National Child Protection Clearing House (NCPCH) published an issues paper with the title, 'Therapeutic Residential Care in Australia: Taking Stock and Looking Forward' (McLean, Price-Robertson, & Robinson, 2011). Taken together, these publications are indicative of an emerging interest in therapeutic residential care after almost three decades of neglect.

Alas, while the book outlines a model of care that may well be what is needed for a significant number of traumatised Australian children, it is not a model of care that is likely to become commonplace. The leadership, knowledge and skill demands that are inherent in this model of care are simply too high and too costly given the small numbers of children this model can treat. Hopefully, this book will stimulate discussion in a range of residential care settings and result in the establishment of some progressive and improved care practices.

Reference

- McLean, S., Price-Robertson, R., & Robinson, E. (2011). Therapeutic residential care in Australia. Taking stock and looking forward. *National Child Protection Clearinghouse Issues*, No. 35.