

Book Review - Residential child care: prospects and challenges

Andrew Kendrick, Editor

London, Jessica Kingsley, 2008. 248 pp, ISBN 978 1 84310 526 8
£18.99

This book forms part of the useful Research Highlights series and addresses residential child care. The book is divided into four helpful sections that cover: wellbeing and development; discrimination; conflict and response; and context and culture. The first section devotes itself to health and education, transitions from care and working within a resilience framework. The second section deals with issues around gender, race, ethnicity and disability. The third section looks at conflict within residential care and is perhaps the most innovative section in the book. Excellent evidence-based discussions on restraint, peer violence and the use of secure accommodation are generally lacking in this area which is often, ironically, one where practitioners and policy makers seek most guidance. This area of the work can be very stressful for staff and young people alike and it is refreshing to see it discussed in such an objective way. The fourth section deals with children's rights, training and recruitment of staff, leadership and therapeutic approaches.

The chapters are grounded in evidence, as might be expected given that the volume highlights research in a variety of areas. They are, however, also written in an engaging and interesting way, often with 'best practice' pointers. The majority of chapters address residential child care specifically, which is excellent, as many books often refer to the wider looked-after population. The recentness and relevance of the research referred to is commendable, while seminal older research is not left behind. The variety of writers who contribute to the volume represents a wide cross-section of researchers and each chapter has its own particular flavour depending on the writer. The researchers who have contributed to the volume are well known and highly respected in their particular area, which adds to the credibility of the book. Practitioners and students will be able to dip into the book and learn something about each of the specific topics in a very short period of time. From a personal viewpoint, the chapter on disability highlights the paucity of related research and will hopefully encourage practitioners, writers and researchers everywhere to add to this important body of knowledge.

The book will be useful for practitioners and students alike. It will also lend itself to providing underpinning knowledge for those staff who are undertaking vocational qualifications in childcare at level four. In my opinion, it should be available in every residential unit and should be required reading for policy makers and managers in the field.

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