This book presents findings from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s programme of research and innovative development projects. The target audiences – policy makers, practitioners such as home care service managers and providers, service users and voluntary organisations – are very well served by this clearly written and practical report.

Whilst the research took place in Manchester, the findings can be readily generalised to other settings, since they describe what people have to say at the ‘front line’ where services are delivered to older people in their homes. The report presents the ideas of older people about what they think makes for good quality home care. These were collected using an interesting three-strand approach. Some older people – often the most frail and those aged over 80 years – were interviewed at home. Others attended focus group meetings, and a small number joined with practitioners and providers in round table discussions. The older people were divided either side of 80 years, and most were white Mancunians, but views and ideas were also elicited from informants in three minority ethnic groups. Thus, there is material which allows some comparison between the ideas of older white people, Chinese women and men, and those with Hindu and Muslim backgrounds, and also between the oldest people and others.

The report makes plain that older people have clear and considered ideas as to what constitutes a good home care service. It is also very explicit as to people’s priorities: these are listed for the over- and the under-80 years of age and for the minority groups. In outline, these 143 people (39 from ethnic minorities) were interested and concerned about six aspects of home care: what carers do; how they are organised; aids and adaptations; getting out and about; transport; and improvement in health services. Detailed lists of requirements, expectations and aspirations are given for each of these areas, along with variations by age and ethnicity. Nothing in these lists will be new to readers who are practitioners, providers or policy makers. They are nonetheless powerful declarations of what needs to be attended to, because they are concise, forthright and represent the participants’ voices with veracity and considerable force.

The methods adopted for the study are also familiar. There were individual, face-to-face interviews in the older person’s home, focus group meetings and round-table meetings with some of the older people and those responsible for providing and delivering services. The findings from each of these strategies have been drawn together to produce the lists, but links are also suggested across these three levels as a basis for further enquiry and future action. Ways of accessing this
kind of detailed, unequivocal information are addressed throughout: the accounts should inspire providers and organisers of services to replicate many of the adopted strategies. This is not to say that everything is deemed feasible. Certain tasks are acknowledged as the remit of agencies other than social services, not least health services, though transport and other government departments are also identified as agencies which need to consider and act. The longer-term view is present, but the great strength of this report is the sense of immediate, urgent optimism it generates. That quite a lot is already within reach, with low and moderate cost implications, is demonstrated; that providers should be acting and developing reliable systems for listening to and taking notice of older people’s ideas is strongly advocated.

The book contains many valuable insights, particularly on the context in which older people formulate their ideas about services – their home life as a whole and their need to get out of the home from time to time. It also contains ample exemplars for all agencies to replicate these strategies when they come to monitor the services they offer. The suggestion, for instance, that just one recipient of home care services should be telephoned each day for their views, and that the views are recorded and considered, is an appealingly simple and feasible objective. Such suggestions, which will serve to acculturise providers and recipients to each others’ perspectives, are offered throughout this report. Not least is the substance of Chapter 6, ‘How to put ideas into practice’, which reminds the reader of the importance of listening to users, and of acting on what is heard – even if this means discussion as to why positive action cannot be taken. In this we are transported from the rhetoric around ‘user voices’ to the real responsibility to hear what is said and, furthermore, to take account of the possibilities which arise. The voices of older people are presented with conviction and strength. They cannot but be heard as serious and extremely valuable – not to say essential – components of the monitoring process at all levels.

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The book is a collection of 13 chapters presented in seven sections. The first, the introduction, is a chapter by Laurence G. Branch on the ageing world which describes the major trends and events of the twentieth century that have markedly influenced the older population. It provides a broad and general overview of the demographic ‘revolution’. The second section deals with biological aspects of ‘Aging and public health’ and includes two chapters. The first, ‘Health and aging’, by Gari Lesnoff-Caravaglia, provides a general profile of older people, various biological dimensions of the ageing process, and discussions of social dimensions of the ageing phenomenon, such as gender, religion, wars and the need to subdivide age into different categories. The second chapter, ‘Nutrition
and older adults’, by Namvar Zohoori, describes the role of nutritional factors in
the development and exacerbation of chronic diseases and age-related changes. It
also provides important information about the factors that affect diet and
nutritional status, as well as the availability of nutritional services for older adults.

The third section of the book deals with psychosocial aspects of aging and public
health and has two chapters. The first, by Ann Rathbun, is about the ‘Psychosocial
parameters of aging’. It reviews both the social theories of ageing and the
various dimensions that result in the heterogeneity of the ageing experience. The
second chapter, by Bob G. Knight and Michele L. Maines, is about ‘Mental
disorders and mental health services in late life: issues for public mental health’.
The chapter describes the different mental illnesses suffered by older people and
the development of the multi-system mental health care in the United States.

The fourth section of the book focuses on special population groups and public
health. Two chapters in this section were written by the editor. The first sheds
light on the characteristics of several kinds of ‘invisible older people’: ‘single
room occupants’ (SROs), who live alone, usually in inner cities or downtown com-
mercial areas; secondly, older people who suffer from ‘Diogenes syndrome’,
meaning extreme self abuse or self neglect; and thirdly older people who are
victims of domestic violence, whether familial or spousal abuse. The second
chapter in this section deals with ‘Growing old in prison’. It offers a broad picture
of the elderly inmates: their profiles, experiences and future concerns. The third,
by Sara A. Quandt and Thomas A. Arcury, explores yet another distinct group
within the older population, ‘The rural elderly’, and identifies public health issues
pertinent to older adults in rural communities and the various services available
for this population.

The fifth section explores environmental aspects of ageing and public health
and has two chapters. The first, ‘Environmental health and aging’, by Michele
Morrone, describes the various food-borne, water-borne, vector-borne and air-
borne diseases and their impact on older people. Timothy J. Ryan, in ‘Safety and
the elderly’, provides an overview of the different injuries suffered by aged people,
their causes, and the public strategies to reduce and prevent such injuries.

The sixth section focuses on technology and ageing. Once again, this topic is
analysed from two perspectives. The first, written by the editor, is on ‘Squaring
the circle: demography and technology’. It describes various pertinent practical
applications of technology, and touches on the issue of adjusting the environment
through technology to prevent or minimise the ‘shrinking of the personal world’ due
to sickness or disability. Finally, the chapter discusses inter-relationships between
technology and health care, and between technology and elderly women. The
second chapter in this section is Timothy J. Ryan’s on security and older people. It
begins by characterising the crimes against order people and their impact, and
then describes strategies for prevention and control over this social phenomenon.

The final section of the book deals with health services and the older adult. Katherine E. W. Will tackles ‘Health services: public policies influencing the
health of older adults’ with an extensive overview of the continuum of care serv-
ices for older people, in both formal and informal settings. It also raises the
importance of health care planning for older people as a strategic need in current
public policy.
All the authors are American, and most are from the health and medical sciences. For readers unfamiliar with American perspectives on various issues in the fields of gerontology or ageing, or for students, policy-makers, service providers and professionals who seek a good American overview of specific subjects in this field, this is an excellent introductory book. The style is not too scientific and all the chapters include a rich bibliography. Moreover, the book touches on specific issues that are rarely dealt with in gerontology texts, and they are integrated well with a common theme. The book can therefore be praised for the range of its topics and coherence. While there are few novel ideas, and no new empirical research or breakthrough approaches, it is nevertheless a useful prompt and starting point for further research and in-depth studies.

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This informative book, a product of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation research programme Transitions after 50, explores people’s experiences, decisions and constraints as they pass from labour market participation in the middle years towards a new identity in later life. Its particular contribution is a study of the relationships between people’s employment histories and their incomes in later life, in part through comparisons of people of pension age with those aged 50–59 years. It also contributes to the debate about contemporary and retirement patterns among people aged in their fifties.

It is a timely addition to current policy debates and media interest in the British government’s pension policy. The Income in Later Life study set out to address three questions: to what extent are employment and income for people in their fifties similar to those for individuals of pension age? How does income change in the years around retirement? What is the relationship between an individual’s employment history and their income in old age? The research draws in particular on nine waves of the British Household Panel Survey.

The format of the publication makes it accessible, with clear signposting and definitions. There are five chapters, the first being an introduction and review of current trends. The following three chapters each address one of the research questions, and the final chapter summarises the findings and has pertinent observations on policy formation. Each chapter is explained clearly, introduced at the beginning and summarised at the end. There are six tables and 10 charts that assist in the understanding of the data. A strength of this research was the detailed analysis throughout of how income in later life differs for men and women and can be related to their different lifecourse experiences. It was found that those at highest risk of low income in later life were women, the oldest age groups, those with few educational qualifications, those who worked in lower earning occupations, and those who spent less of their fifties in paid work.
The authors identify and discuss the policy tension that arises because of different income distribution goals. Measures that aim to increase savings through occupational and personal schemes reduce the incidence of low income in old age but perpetuate working life differences. Bardasi and Jenkins suggest that the issue of reducing income inequalities in later life is really an issue of reducing inequalities earlier in life, in both the labour market and in the burden of family responsibilities. I highly recommend this book as a contribution to understanding the complex transition into retirement and its effect on later life. It will be of interest to policy makers, academics and anyone involved in gerontological debates.

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This is an important book for both undergraduate and postgraduate students who are studying social welfare, social work and social policy. It is very clearly focused on welfare services for older people, as the sub-title suggests, but international readers should note that it deals exclusively with the British case. This book is a sequel to Means and Smith’s well known and highly regarded text, *From Poor Law to Community Care: The Development of Welfare Services for Elderly People, 1939–71*. It brings the earlier overview up-to-date with recent policy initiatives including the modernisation agenda for social services, ‘Best Value’ and the ‘Performance Assessment Framework’.

In addition to outlining and exploring the policy developments at the national level, the authors have researched the records of four unidentified local authorities: a London borough, two English counties and a metropolitan authority; thereby demonstrating how centrally-devised policy initiatives are translated into service provision locally. Chapter 4, ‘The changing role of local authority residential care’, provides an example of how the work is structured. The chapter initially establishes the time frame, 1971 to 1993, which given the rapid pace of policy change is already dated. A brief introduction discusses the context of local authority residential care from the *National Assistance Act 1948*. The chapter then discusses the rapid growth of public sector residential care through the 1970s. The changing levels of dependence of older people in local authority residential care, and the growth of the independent sector from the 1980s are featured. The chapter covers the major themes and issues which were affecting residential care in the period under review and organisation of the book ensures that these discussion points are illustrated by reference to each of the local authorities. Noticeable by its absence, however, is a discussion of the effect of central policy developments on the lives of older people who use formal services.

Equally, this chapter had the opportunity to bring the reader up to date by exploring in more detail the issues affecting this sector of provision in the nearly 10 years since the stated time period. It could have explored the tensions between...
local authority providers of residential care and the independent sector, particularly how they impacted on the commissioners and purchasers of residential care. For example, was there any evidence of purchasing bias in the policies adopted by the authorities? In practice was there a bias towards the use of the ex-local authority sector?

Given that the book was published in 2002, other legislative, policy and structural changes affecting residential care could have been identified. These changes include the Care Standards Act 2000 and the establishment of the National Care Standards Commission and national minimum standards. Their potential impact could have been explored. This leads to my major criticism of the work, the actual effect on services and thereby individual older people of the local implementation of centrally-devised policy initiatives. As an example, in the period under review social work practice with older people underwent considerable changes of process, structure, organisation and overall objectives. Absent from this book is any reflection on these changes as they affect older people’s lives. Nonetheless, this remains an important book for those who have an interest in the development of British social welfare policy. I look forward to the authors’ analysis of the ‘third way’ and its impact on welfare services for older people, which hopefully will reflect constitutional devolution and the establishment of national differences.

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This is an interesting and useful edited collection on older people’s transitions from work into retirement. This area of work has increasing significance with the interacting changes of demography, employment careers, and social welfare systems, and their effects on the financial standing and independence of older people. As several of the contributors comment, our understanding of these issues is limited because a great deal of the required evidence is unavailable.

In the first chapter, ‘A new field of study’, the editor outlines the case for studying older workers, especially in relation to productivity, poverty and social exclusion. This book harnesses the literature reviews undertaken for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s Transitions after 50 research programme. Hirsch says, ‘there was uncertainty about whether it posed a sufficiently wide range of questions to merit a research programme. The chapters that follow indicate why all such doubts should have been dispelled’ (p. 5). This short collection does begin to build a case for research into older people and transitions. Each chapter outlines the current state of ‘knowledge’ in key areas of older people’s welfare, and follows with suggestions and recommendations for further research. If there is a criticism, it is that relatively few areas of older people’s lives and society have been included. Much more could have been explored, such as: meaning in later life; activities, education, leisure and personal purpose.
Nick Davidson and Cathy Street in Chapter 2 review issues of older people and paid work. A valuable section with interesting survey results shows that early retirees withdraw psychologically from work prior to their actual physical withdrawal. It is perhaps not surprising that the investment of personal energy follows intention. Psychological withdrawal is then an anticipatory way of managing personal priorities, not quite the same as disengagement theory which suggests a mutual withdrawal. In Chapter 3, ‘The income dimension’, Geraldine Barker and Ruth Hancock review the economic resources, financial requirements and needs of people aged 55–74 years. Their recommendations for future research are realistic. Justin Davis Smith’s chapter, ‘Active participation beyond employment’, reviews volunteering with an objective critique of ‘active’ and ‘inactive’ roles of older people. Overall, this interesting and informative collection shows the current limitations of information about older people during transitions.

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