**Children in Difficulty: A Guide to Understanding and Helping**

**J. Elliot & M. Place**


£14.99 (pb).

This paperback says nothing new, nor should it. The authors overview child development in one chapter using Erikson’s perennial eight stage model. In the next chapter they address ‘The basics of being helpful’ in a succinct overview of ‘the talking therapies’, ‘behavioural approaches’, ‘drug treatments’ and ‘milieu therapy and intensive approaches’. The remaining seven chapters are devoted to the following topics: school refusal, attention deficit disorder and hyperactivity, eating disorders, traumatic and stressful situations, non-compliance in young children, disruptiveness in the classroom, drug and solvent abuse, and depression. Each chapter is practical and readable, supported with case vignettes, without sacrificing scientific rigour. For example, the chapter on attention deficit disorder defines the diagnostic criteria of ADHD and the relationship with conduct disorder. Dietary, pharmacological and behavioural interventions are critically reviewed, and self-help group addresses are provided. The text is supported throughout by appropriate and up-to-date references.

I would have valued this little book in the first weeks and months of my training in child psychiatry, and at this stage of my career I am sure I will use it as a resource for preparing lectures and seminars. I will also recommend it as an introductory text for junior trainees in psychiatry and psychology, and as a workplace reference book for social workers, teachers and general practitioners.

*David Hartman*
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**Special Educational Needs in the Twentieth Century: A Cultural Analysis**

**J. Corbett**


£12.99 (pb).

This short book provides a useful commentary on special educational needs from historical, cultural and international perspectives. Each of these dimensions is addressed but, as Corbett acknowledges, they are touched upon rather than explored at length. As a result, the book is a mixture of many well presented elements, interspersed with less developed and at times unsatisfactory argument.

A discussion of the history of special educational needs, including its conceptualisation, assessment and approaches to intervention, presents a useful reminder of the past, where expectations were limited, and rights were diminished. Inclusive education and the disability movement’s contribution to improving educational opportunities are tackled sympathetically but critically. The strong sense of humanity and the need to disentangle value positions is evident, as is Corbett’s own position. The dilemmas that arise from attempting to meet the resulting demands are also explored. Less successful are the sections on educational standards, behavioural difficulties and especially the problems involved in Special Educational Needs Tribunals. Here no evidence is presented for a problem that is asserted to exist with respect to independent educational psychologists.

Local authority educational psychologists are considered to be at a disadvantage as they lack time, and do not produce reports based upon large numbers of tests. But this unsubstantiated claim misses the point, namely, the importance of appropriate and high quality assessment and advice from professionals working with integrity, limited neither by restrictions nor partisan opinions.

Another weakness of the book is the relatively limited empirical base. Much use is made of a small number of sources to make points of general application. However, if the reader accepts this approach, there is a richness of ideas and argument which others may explore more systematically.

In summary, I enjoyed this book, despite some frustrations. Jenny Corbett writes as a committed but critical commentator. The book will be of interest and value to all working in the special needs field.

*Geoff Lindsay*
<br>University of Warwick Institute of Education, Coventry

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**Divided Duties: Care Planning for Children Within the Family Justice System**

**Lord Justice M. Thorpe & E. Clarke (Eds.)**


£19.50 (pb).

This significant book is edited on behalf of the President of the Family Division of the High Court by a senior judge and barrister. Lord Justice Matthew Thorpe, the senior editor, chairs an inter-disciplinary committee. The members of this committee represent: the Department of Health, the Social Services Inspectorate, a range of distinguished professionals from the fields of social work, law, child mental health, the police, and charitable agencies whose varied skills spring from academia, clinical practice, management and legislation.

In September 1997 a London-based conference, the second under the auspices of this committee, invited participants from the listed disciplines with the specific task of considering care planning within the family justice system.

The ‘care plan’, as indicated by Mr Justice Wall during the first session, is not a statutory document, receiving no reference in the Children Act 1989 nor the Family Proceedings Rules of 1991, neither is it referred to within the regulations to the Act. It is a shorthand term that has been used for convenience when describing the duty of local authorities, in legal proceedings, to ‘so far as is reasonably practical, make immediate and long-term arrangements for that placement, and for promoting the welfare of the child who is to be placed’.

As indicated by Arran Poyser, care planning is a policy developed over time by the Department of Health and currently subject to detailed study by the Department that also has funded additional research by Joan Hunt of the University of Bristol and Judith Harwin of Sussex University.

The requirement is that local authorities in Care Proceedings present to the judge a plan for the child. The judge, at the time of the hearing, given that threshold criteria for making an Order have been established, nevertheless should make that Order only if the care plan is coherent and acceptable.
The judiciary are concerned that this is a one-off intervention: after the Care Order is made, there is no come-back by the Court, the guardian ad litem or the parents if the care plan proves unachievable either for administrative, financial or practice reasons.

The ‘divided duties’ of the title, therefore, are those split between the judiciary, those who represent the child in Care Proceedings, parents who retain responsibility after an Order is made and local authorities with restricted budgets and ever-expanding responsibilities within the framework of the Children Act.

This book is a most useful contribution to the resultant debate. Should there be opportunities for judicial review of care planning decisions analogous to powers formerly available to courts in wardship proceedings? Should guardians ad litem have laid upon them statutory duties for a limited time, perhaps a year, after the making of a Care Order? Are the many checks and balances upon local authorities, ranging from the Social Services Inspectorate to the Ombudsman, in themselves sufficient if well used? How may care plans be costed? How may resource usage be linked, more effectively, to the individual needs of children within the wide range of duties imposed by the Act upon local authorities? How may a coherent case be made for increased resources, applied in which areas?

A theme throughout the book, set in context by Olive Stevenson in her overview of recent research, is the lack of data on which to base coherent answers to these valuable questions. There is no framework in which the outcome of decision-making in the planning subsequent to Care Proceedings is correlated coherently, and with consistency in adhering to a care plan, ensuring feedback to judges and guardians ad litem about the results of decision-making, in ensuring the effective use and availability of resources or, most importantly of all, about the effect upon the child. In the papers presented, professionals were able to give examples of problems arising in the fields of legal decision-making, social work, law and child representation, but each presenter was aware that these were personal accounts, not as yet available for linkage with a statistics-based body of knowledge.

Nevertheless, the working groups arising from the conference were able to produce useful guidelines for good practice within the current framework and a working group will take forward this task. Core elements shared by all groups were:

A care plan is important in:

- bringing together the views of all involved about the needs of the child;
- the provision of a profile of needs specific to an individual child at a particular point in time;
- monitoring for future care and planning—even in the face of changing social workers;
- a good and practical plan which is considered a best match for the needs of that child.

There was a consensus also (not surprisingly) that children are vulnerable within the care system and that inter-disciplinary work is of the essence.

An important complement to these very uncontroversial comments is the view that, in Care Proceedings, threshold criteria must be established at an early date, rather than having attempts to plan for the future of a child hindered by continued uncertainty by all parties, including parents, as to whether there are appropriate grounds for doing this work. When threshold criteria have been established, parents can address the implications of this, planning can take a new direction and there are possibilities for ‘different but potentially fruitful forms of communication’ between the Department of Social Services and parents. A ‘split’ hearing, which establishes threshold criteria, may be of the greatest benefit to the care planning process.

Infrastructure in any locality is important, together with good joint working and inter-agency co-operation that is set within a culture of caring preventative work for all children within the community. Audit of this work is essential: ‘There is no information on the level of serious problems which may be set against the proportion of care plans where no significant problems are encountered’.

This is perhaps the note on which to end this review, since in the view of the writer, without audit the same debate will continue at the same level of knowledge, indefinitely. The working parties suggest:

1. A prospective audit could follow cases coming before certain High Court and County Court judges over a three-month period and their progress could then be monitored.
2. A retrospective audit could look at cases appearing before certain High Court and County Court judges during a specified time, or court cases from specific local authorities between specified dates. Care must be taken that these are representative samples and the outcome of each care plan should be evaluated. A third possibility would be retrospective review of all cases in a specific division of the High Court.
3. Funding should be sought for a researcher, consultation and supervision.

A final comment is that Social Services and social work departments feel themselves to be under siege and denigrated. The need, in the view of the working party, is for social workers, who are valued as professionals, with a social work council equivalent to the disciplinary bodies for other professions, should receive recognition that resources in social work, as in medicine, always will be limited, and that a range of children in each community are in need of protection.

The view of participants, expressed by the Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Thorpe in closing remarks, is that conferences such as this are valuable in bringing together disciplines, in the formulation of coherent questions, and in proposals for obtaining rather better quality answers than are yet available. This is necessary work that should continue.

Jean Harris Hendriks
Trauma Stress Clinic, London

John Bowlby: His Early Life—A Biographical Journey into the Roots of Attachment Theory
S. van Dijken

The author, Suzan van Dijken, is a researcher in the Centre for Child and Family Studies at the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Rijks University, Leiden, The Netherlands. The question she seeks to answer is why Bowlby chose the topic of separation of young children from, mainly, their mothers, as the leading issue in his works. Her approach is to try to show ‘the intertwining’ between his personal history and the history of attachment theory.

Her account takes the reader to 1951, the publication year of Bowlby’s well-known...
monograph for the World Health Organisation, Maternal care and mental health, which, it is asserted, dates a turning point in his theoretical approach towards an ethological orientation.

In her diligent search for reliable information about Bowlby’s life from infancy onwards, the author acknowledges the help from his wife, Ursula, and other close relatives, from colleagues, experts in related fields of study, and especially from the Contemporary Medical Archives Centre of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine in London.

For the reader who is not familiar with the topic, the short condensed Introduction summarising Bowlby’s works plus the brief ‘Conclusions’ at the end of each chapter will prove a useful reference. Even the cognoscenti will discover some nuggets of new information; about the loss of four-year-old John’s beloved nursemaid, his apparent lack of visible reaction to his father’s death, the assertion of his sister that the children could only get their mother’s attention when they asked her questions about nature, and about John’s apparent reluctance to discuss his brief experience as a school-master. Those of us who have worked in the child guidance field of yesteryear will hardly be surprised at Bowlby’s claim to have learned more as an icebreaker, reassuring child and professional alike that a subsequent dialogue on important matters might be possible.

Anastasia Widdicombe
Barnet Healthcare NHS Trust, London

Has the author succeeded in her aim? Intertwining? Yes. Causality? Hardly. Still, a worthy endeavour that includes a useful appendix of explanatory notes, and a comprehensive bibliography.

Fred H. Stone
Glasgow, Scotland

Creative Therapy: Activities with Children and Adolescents
A. Hobday & K. Ollier

Many professionals admit to feelings of anxiety when they begin to work with children; Creative therapy could help. The book contains over 100 activities geared to the child’s developmental level which can be used in conjunction with other methods of assessment and treatment. The authors have derived ideas from their own experience as clinical psychologists, mainly working cognitive behavioural techniques. Some of the suggestions could be incorporated into family therapy sessions, others will be of particular interest to those doing Life Story work, or working with situations such as bereavement. These activities could have an important function as an icebreaker, reassuring child and professional alike that a subsequent dialogue on important matters might be possible.

Anastasia Widdicombe
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Facing it Out: Clinical Perspectives on Adolescent Disturbance
R. Anderson & A. Dartington (Eds.)

This is a delightful book, edited by Anderson and Dartington, both practising psychoanalysts in the Adolescent Department of the Tavistock Clinic. It is one in a series of books produced from the Tavistock and deals with the crucial phase of adolescence and the disturbances commonly seen. The book is easy to read and very well presented; although short, at 178 pages, it is crammed with 11 chapters, all of a high standard. I like the format with an introduction that highlights the theoretical orientation of the author, the therapeutic dilemmas, and commonly encountered problems with clinical examples. The book is not exhaustive, but neither is it skimpy. Indeed, the editors have taken a position of interesting the reader and highlighting particular areas with the relevant clinical material. There are short reference lists at the end of each chapter. Whilst the book would not be sufficient on its own, it certainly is complementary to other major texts on adolescent psychiatry and adolescent psychotherapy.

There are chapters on major problems found in adolescent psychiatric practice: suicide; working with sexually abused adolescents; eating disorders, and other common themes that are particularly worthwhile; working with families from a psychoanalytic perspective; work and identity, and interesting chapters on the fear of becoming a man, and the position of the scapegoat.

I would recommend this book for those working with disturbed adolescents. I am sure the book was intended to aid clinical work and in that I think it succeeds. The book deserves to be widely read.

Anthony James
Warneford Hospital, Oxford

Books by Members

Lucie Andersen-Wood & Benita Rae Smith
Working with Pragmatics: A Practical Guide to Promoting Communicative Confidence

Patricia Howlin
Behavioural Approaches to Problems in Childhood

Patricia Howlin, Simon Baron-Cohen & Julie Hadwin
Teaching Children with Autism to Mind-read: A Practical Guide

Kevin J. Connolly
The Psychobiology of the Hand