

Editorial

Donal Giltinan

Newspoints

Letters

Report of a survey of independent fostering agencies: providing high quality services to children and carers

Clive Sellick

Key words: independent fostering agencies, placement services

Independent fostering agencies have grown significantly in recent years in an era which encouraged the expansion of non-governmental welfare services. Sellick reviews the practice and research literature in respect of this placement sector and its associated services to children and foster carers. He also summarises some major issues which have emerged from the recent evaluation of one independent fostering agency. The views of agency foster carers and local authority social workers are considered, alongside case material relating to children placed. Conclusions are drawn about the future relationship between public and independent fostering agencies.

The role of social workers in intercountry adoption: an analysis of the experience of adopters from Romania

Celia Beckett, Diana Bredenkamp, Jenny Castle, Christine Groothues and the ERA study team

Key words: intercountry adoption, Romania, role of social workers

People who adopted children from Romania between 1990 and 1992 experienced considerable difficulties arranging the adoptions, both in Romania and the UK. It is not known how many more potential adopters were unsuccessful. Based on a study of 148 families adopting 165 children, this article sheds light on the difficulties encountered in England and implications of agency and non-agency practice in relation to these adopters. The placements are progressing well, but there is some evidence that those applicants who were approved by specialist local authority social workers have a more sustained sense of the importance for the child of issues concerning their background and identity.

Intercountry adoption: implications for adoption agencies and medical advisers

Chey Harnott and Rosemary Robertson

Key words: intercountry adoption, health and development, adoption agencies, preparation and assessment

The authors describe their findings during the surveillance of 35 children from overseas who entered Hampshire for the purpose of adoption between 1990 and 1995. This article emphasises the importance of screening the health and development of these children given the high number of unsuspected medical problems found, many of which were significant. It also identifies a number of key issues for adoption agencies to consider when preparing and assessing applicants for intercountry adoption, and the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach in helping to support the adopters in their task of caring for the child.

Are care leavers significantly dissatisfied and depressed in adult life?

Ann Buchanan

Key words: looked after children, life satisfaction, emotional well-being, longitudinal studies, NCDS

Using data from the National Child Development Study (NCDS), Buchanan explores the links between children who have been 'in care' (as they were known pre-Children Act 1989), life satisfaction in adult life, psychological problems at 16 and depression at 33.

In adult life, children who had been in care were less satisfied with their lives and were significantly more at risk of psychological problems at age 16 and depression at age 33. Despite this finding, three out of four children did not have psychological problems at 16, and four out of five did not have such problems at 33. Those who were satisfied with their lives were more likely to have qualifications, jobs and partners, but since life satisfaction can relate to out-of-home and out-of-work activities, this paper suggests that creating opportunities for young people to develop these outside interests as they grow up may increase their sense of self-worth and indirectly protect them from later mental health problems.

Support for birth mothers in a group setting

Francesca Harris and Noel Whyte

Key words: adoption counselling, birth mothers, group support

In the last two decades of the twentieth century, there have been a number of research studies into the effects of relinquishing a child for adoption. Each of these in turn has contributed to a better understanding of the initial impact and long-term effects of adoption on birth parents. Similarly, those working in the post-adoption field have met and counselled many birth parents and have learnt at first hand how they have suffered and how their lives have been distorted as a result. This article describes why they decided to set up a group for birth mothers in a particular situation, the actual meetings themselves and the conclusions they drew from the whole experience.

A parenting programme for parents of children of children with disturbed attachment patterns

Christine Gordon

Key words: adoption, attachment, trauma, parenting strategies, anger, control

It is widely accepted that early experiences colour the way in which children view the world and in particular their relationships with other people. Gordon describes a programme of intervention with children who have attachment difficulties as a result of living in trauma during infancy. The article looks at developing a theoretical framework for understanding the ways in which early trauma affects a child at psychological, emotional and physiological levels. It describes an approach to parenting which is more effective than the traditional methods which tend to work better with children who have had healthy and relatively trauma-free early childhoods. The author briefly examines how this approach can be used with other forms of intervention which work more directly with children in helping them to untangle early experiences and make sense of their history.

Work in progress: ‘War babes’: the lived experiences of adults born to black GIs and British women during World War II

Janet Baker

Research for practice: Adoption and direct post-adoption contact

Janette Logan and Carole Smith

Legal notes: England and Wales

Deborah Cullen

Legal notes: Scotland

Alexandra Plumtree

Medical notes: looked after children and consent to medical examination and treatment

Desmond Fitzpatrick

Book reviews

Diary