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Book Review

Dilemmas and decision making in residential child care

By Abbi Jackson

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Reviewed by: Dan Johnson

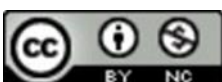
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Anyone who has worked in residential care will know that it is full of frequent, varied, and difficult decisions to make.

These can occur in intense and stressful situations where decisions can have severe implications. In such situations there can be little chance to carefully think things through. This can place both young people and those looking after them in at least difficult, and at worst dangerous, situations.

Jackson's book offers part of a solution. The book is not an academic study of the ethics or morals involved in providing residential care. Instead, it is a pragmatic and practical look at many examples of dilemmas and decisions. It provides numerous case study scenarios, exploring the decisions made and the reasons for these. It gives practitioners what is often missing in practice: a chance to think. Importantly, Jackson does not rigidly state what is right and wrong. She instead encourages reflection and critical thinking, which is so important in residential childcare. What this book has, that many others do not, is a comprehensive range of examples of practice and exploration of the thinking and reasoning of workers in these difficult situations. By exploring these examples readers can gain many ideas and possible strategies they could apply themselves.

Importantly, Jackson is able to relate theory to these scenarios, including ideas about mentalisation and trauma. She demonstrates how an understanding of theory can inform and therefore improve decision making. By highlighting and



relating theory and concepts to real life scenarios she makes them more practical and encourages practitioners to apply them directly to their practice. This is such a positive aspect that I found myself wishing there was more of this threaded throughout the book.

This book will be of interest to anyone who has to make decisions in residential child care. This includes both those new to the practice and those with many years' experience. It will also be a useful tool and resource to anyone supporting or developing staff, such as those in learning and development.

I had expected an academic book that discussed some of the underlying moral and ethical semantic themes behind decision making. Fortunately, this book is not that. Instead, it provides resources that have real life utility and that may help improve decision-making in residential care.

About the reviewer

Dan Johnson is the clinical director at the Kibble Education and Care Centre.

The publisher, Critical Publishing, supplied a copy of this book for review.

