



## Book reviews

### **Child welfare professionals and incest families. A difficult encounter**

INGRID K. THOMPSON-COOPER

2001, *Aldershot, Ashgate*

289 p. ISBN 1 85628 880 3

The way social welfare and justice systems deal with cases of intrafamily child sexual abuse strongly varies from country to country. In some countries a punitive approach is adopted whereas in other countries professionals try to find a balance between punishment and treatment. The iatrogenic effects of certain practices (i.e. coercion and punitive measures) on perpetrators, victims and families are well-known, but often very difficult to avoid due to system characteristics. This book reports on a comparative study on the way disclosed incest cases are processed through the criminal court system and the child welfare system in two countries, Canada and England. The focus is on the process of disclosure, the nature of the decision-making, the type of interventions, the impact of the systems on victims and families and the question whether criminal procedures are desirable or necessary in responding to incest cases. The author examined cases of intrafamily child sexual abuse referred to the National Society for the Protection of Children (England) and to the Department of Youth Protection in Montreal (Quebec, Canada). A thorough comparative analysis on 585 variables dealing with seven issues (sexual abuse characteristics; victim, perpetrator, victim's mother and family characteristics; previous contacts with professionals; current referral for alleged sexual abuse; the decision-making process; professional decisions about interventions following referral; follow-up) is presented. The author concludes, among others, that due to the complex nature of intrafamilial child sexual abuse a sensitive balancing of therapeutic and control interventions is necessary in order to secure the safety of the child and to preserve the family relationships. Sensitive balancing « requires much more effort and skill than an automatic reliance on court proceeding (civil or criminal) » (p. 227). This study is unique in that it provides an empirically based cross-national view on professionals' reactions towards cases of intramilial child sexual abuse.

### **Becoming delinquent: British and European youth, 1650-1950**

Edited by PAMELA COX & HEATHER SHORE

2002, *Aldershot, Ashgate*

184 p. ISBN 0 7546 2228 2

This book provides an overview of the history of juvenile delinquency in Great Britain and continental Europe. It contains contributions from England, Wales, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Norway and Spain. The editors argue that the history of juvenile delinquency cannot be separated out from the history of families, institutions, legal processes, youth culture, gender and consumption. Indeed, each contributor shows how the history of juvenile delinquency is embedded in the political, socioeconomic, cultural and ideological history of his own country. Readers can compare, identify and understand similarities and differences between countries. This makes this book to a very valuable one for professionals interested in the roots of

contemporary society's reactions towards delinquency (including links with poor parenting, poverty, urban culture and family breakdown) and in current strategies to cope with and deter delinquency. Highly recommended.

**The legal position of minors in practice (De juridische positie van de minderjarige in de praktijk)**

Edited by Kinderrechtswinkels

2002, Heule, UGA Editions

370 p. ISBN 90 6768 241 1

As a consequence of the implementation of the Children's Right Convention, much attention in Western countries is devoted to the legal position of minors. The Convention is made visible by legal texts (e.g., the constitution), by the installation of children's rights commissioners and by revisions of child and youth care practices (e.g., decision-making procedures which take into account feelings and opinions of children). As practices change rapidly, provision of relevant and up-to-date information is crucial. This book is a compendium for professionals, parents and youngsters on the legal position of minors in Flanders (Belgium). It is edited by the Kinderrechtswinkels (Children's Rights Shops) and provides accurate but easily accessible information to these target groups on different topics, for instance origins (including sections on adoption), young people in court, young people as victim and/or perpetrator of a crime, education, employment and (unaccompanied) minor refugees. Legal aspects are reviewed and practical information is given. This book is a must for minors, parents and professionals in Flanders. We hope this initiative will inspire children's rights workers from other countries.