

unwilling to accept that admission seems desirable, and this book provides it.

Richard Williams, a child and adolescent psychiatrist until recently Director of the Health Advisory Service (HAS), and Richard White, a highly respected solicitor specialising in the field of child law, have combined to edit the text. They cover different aspects of the Children Act (Private Law Orders, Public Law Orders and Orders for the Protection of Children), and then consider the state of the law in relation to consent to treatment, wardship, special educational needs, restriction of liberty, aftercare and complaints procedures. Throughout their approach is descriptive rather than prescriptive, and when, as in the case of involuntary admission, there are possible alternative courses of action they do not provide guidance but expand on the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. This might be regarded as rather over cautious, but I expect this was dictated by the semi-official nature of this publication.

The book is very clearly written, without legal jargon. I would think that any child psychiatrist having ready access to it, and to the latest edition of *Child Psychiatry and the Law* by Dora Black and colleagues, also published by Gaskell Press, would be fully equipped to face any legal dilemma.

My only reservation concerns the format. We are now used to Department of Health pronouncements about the need to avoid waste in the NHS, at the same time as we receive documents published by that Department that are incredibly wasteful of high-quality paper. This book has been published in the standard HAS format. The text is bordered by five-inch margins, and the book has 121 pages of which 46 (37%) are either blank or filled with computer scribble. Why is it thought necessary to imitate the Department of Health in this respect?

PHILIP GRAHAM, 27 St Albans Road, London NW5 1RG

Living in the Community. By DIANA ROSE. London: Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health. 1996. 48 pp. £4. ISBN 1-870480-26-0.

Living in the Community reports a survey of 76 mental health service users' views of how they are treated in their day-to-day lives in the wider community. The author, Diana Rose, has a background in social sciences and a PhD in social psychology. She has also been a user of mental health services for 25 years. The researchers who administered the semistructured interviews were also service users with in-patient

experience and were clearly up-front about this in their contact with subjects. They chose not to ask for diagnoses (to emphasise that the interview was about users' experiences and not their mental health), but most subjects volunteered their diagnosis of schizophrenia. The sample was drawn from a day centre (58 users) and 18 'hard to engage' clients interviewed via their key-workers.

This small, well-written pamphlet gives a clear description of those interviewed and their experiences. Friends, church, family community organisations and casual contacts (in that order) are appreciated and experienced as supportive and understanding. Housing agency and social security staff and the police (again, in that order) are experienced as positively rude and even hostile. Work colleagues and neighbours lie somewhere between.

The users interviewed attributed much of the stigma and discrimination they experienced to the influence of the media. Television and the newspapers are blamed for fostering frightening stereotypes of mental illness. Diana Rose concludes that inadequate training for front-line staff (whether housing, social security or police) is a major factor perpetuating their poor treatment by these groups. She sees improved training, drawing heavily on input from service users, to be the way forward.

At one level this could make pessimistic reading. I was struck, however, by how many of the experiences described reflected the common human problems faced by disadvantaged individuals surviving in a complex urban environment. They did not sound particularly exclusive to users of mental health services. The problems with neighbours could apply to any of us. Likewise, the relationships with social security staff, housing staff, work supervisors and the police could just as easily have featured in a report on the unemployed or ethnic minorities. This is not to excuse it, and we must strive towards a more accepting, tolerant society for all its members. In the past it has been the special misfortune for the mentally ill to be doubly burdened. They were marginalised by poverty and unemployment, and then shunned even by the poor and unemployed through fear and misunderstanding. I could detect hints in this survey that this second barrier was perhaps beginning to dissolve.

This book is mercifully free from shrill ideological attacks on mental health workers and is well worth buying and reading.

TOM BURNS, Section of Community Psychiatry, St George's Hospital Medical School, Cranmer Terrace, London SW17 0RE