

COLLEGE VIEW

We're setting out on a journey to help social workers navigate their career paths

As interim co-chairs of the College of Social Work, Corinne May-Chahal and I are delighted to contribute to *Community Care*. This column gives us the valuable opportunity to engage with people at the heart of social work, to talk about key issues in the social work arena and to let you know how the college will work to resolve these issues and support you in the future.

We have now met the interim board twice. Not surprisingly, the main topic of discussion has been our major consultation exercise, which ran from May to October this year.

The top line findings from the consultation events with social work practitioners, students, lecturers and managers are now available on our website (www.collegeofsocialwork.org). The event feedback clearly shows strong support for the original purpose, functions and values set out by the development team at the start of the exercise.



Bates: Insightful consultations

We have also been working with a number of user-led organisations, consulting children and young people, parents, unaccompanied asylum seekers, young carers, youth offenders, people affected by mental health issues, adults with learning disabilities and people with drug and alcohol addiction problems. The team heard some insightful

accounts of people's experiences of social work services, both positive and negative.

This feedback has been invaluable and has shown the importance of co-creating the college with people who use social work services.

We are now considering how we continue to engage with people who use social work services and their carers as the college develops. We are now working closely with the interim board to develop a future strategy for the college, based on the feedback from the events and the online consultation.

Most people we met at the consultation events were in strong agreement that the college will need to adopt an independent voice when working with the public, policy makers and the media, actively promoting the real and lasting benefits that social work can bring to individuals and communities.

Improved communication was also a consistent theme; all

participants expressed an urgent need for the role and functions of social work to be defined, so that service users are fully aware of what they can realistically expect from their social worker.

Most importantly, people likened their ideal social worker to a "human sat nav system". A good social worker should be able to navigate a person through their troubles towards their ideal future, understanding the need for fast and responsive support in times of crisis.

It was proposed that the college should become a one-stop shop of expertise, acting as a beacon of excellence and leadership for the profession. Information and expertise from people who use social work services can contribute to enhanced learning, good practice and improved communication.

We look forward to updating you in January, after our third meeting with the interim board.

Maurice Bates is interim co-chair of the College of Social Work

BOOK REVIEWS

Placements and managing in austere times

Social Work Placements: A Traveller's Guide

★★★★★

Mark Doel, Routledge
ISBN 0415499125

Social work placements are a central element of social work degree courses but they often do not receive the attention they deserve, writes *Keith Popple*.

Mark Doel's unique and helpful student text is aimed at those who are undertaking this most important part of their social work education. As the author remarks, if one asks an established social worker about their training they will talk about their placement experiences.

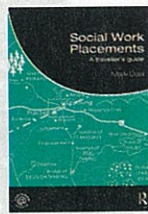
What is different about Doel's

book is that he has written for students embarking on a journey through the terrain he calls Socialworkland.

This fictional yet realistic world has in its geography the garden of mistakes, the pond of doubt, the bridge of decision-making, the orchard of new ideas and so on.

Written in a jargon-free and accessible style, the author accompanies the student from the start of the journey when they traverse the criminal record check through some of the highs and lows they must expect on their journey, to their writing up of their placement.

Not all students will want to conceptualise their placement as a journey, but for those who do this is a powerful and useful text. **Keith Popple** is professor of social work, London South Bank University



People Management in a Harsh Financial Climate - Developing your Managers on a Tight Budget

★★★★★

Blair McPherson, Russell House Publishers
ISBN 9781905541638

Blair McPherson's pertinent book for a period of austerity helps to look at management development in a creative learning style, writes *Helen Peddlesden*.

It is an easy read, neatly divided into 37 sections. The ethos is for trainers, manager and mentors to pull out material that is relevant to support the development of management groups. As the author states, at its simplest this involves individuals or groups reading an article and then generating discussion.

Don't expect to have answers from this book because it is more about the encouragement of managers to reflect, discuss and to develop. For example,

on recruitment, you can explore not only interviewing prospective staff but also being interviewed.

The questions at times seem basic but this can lead to further discussion and debate.

The sections give varied examples, from hot-desking at Lancashire Council to the late football manager Brian Clough's leadership style.

This is a stimulating way to develop managers and is particularly useful if your organisation uses this method in learning sets or mentor discussions.

The book is set out so that you can also choose the most relevant to your organisation. However, it would only benefit you if you learn from this particular style.

Helen Peddlesden is a senior social worker in adults' services from Bristol

