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The Well-Being of Children in the UK, Fourth Edition
JONATHAN BRADSHAW (ED.), 2016
Bristol, Policy Press
425 pp., cloth £80.00/ paper £27.99
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The wealth of literature regarding children's well-being and the introduction of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) index of children's well-being (to be updated annually) demonstrate the depth and breadth of interest in the topic. This volume seeks to draw together and provide a critical overview of the evidence regarding children's well-being in the UK from a variety of sources.

For those who have read or consulted the third edition of this text, the current fourth edition will feel very familiar. Like its predecessor, the text begins with a brief overview of demographic information relevant to childhood in the UK. Following this, a selection of authors (the vast majority of whom are the same as in the previous edition) guide the reader through key domains relevant to child well-being. These are: child poverty and deprivation; physical health; subjective well-being and mental health; education; housing and the environment for children; children's time and space (particularly relevant for Children's Geographies readers); children and young people in care and leaving care; child maltreatment; childcare and early years and children, crime and correction.

Further, the book continues the same sustained focus as the previous edition in responding to a set overarching questions: What is the current trend in well-being? How do the countries of the UK compare? What are the associates of the outcomes that are being reviewed? How does the UK compare with other industrialised countries? This helps to promote coherence and consistency in this multi-authored text. Again, just as before each chapter follows the same structure with an accessible summary of key statistics, trends and sources at the outset. This also helps to promote coherence in this multi-authored text. As well as authoring/co-authoring three of the chapters, the editor, Professor Jonathan Bradshaw dovetails the text with a concise, incisive introduction and conclusion.

If the format, presentation and feel of the text is very similar to that of the third edition, Professor Bradshaw rightly highlights the very different policy context for this fourth edition. He outlines that the period up to 2008 was characterised by unprecedented economic growth, high employment rates, substantial increases in public funding for education, health, transport and benefits for families with children as well as the establishment of Sure Start, nursery education extended to three and four year olds; investment in pre-school childcare. The period also saw substantial increases in expenditure on education and improving literacy and numeracy. In sharp contrast, following the 2010 General Election, the Coalition government's strategy has been to implement a whole raft of austerity measures with significant cuts in benefits and services. Further, a number of reports have shown that these austerity measures have had the biggest impact on the poorest families in the UK - they have experienced the biggest losses in income and the largest cuts to services. Revisiting how children's wellbeing is faring in this very different policy context then is a worthwhile pursuit.

The wide-ranging, information-dense, analytic yet accessible text will appeal to a multi-disciplinary audience. Students, researchers, policymakers and on-the-ground practitioners will find this a relevant, up-to-date and comprehensive resource. Though of course the text focuses on the UK, the inclusion of international comparisons in each chapter and the critical take on the different domains of wellbeing mean that the text will appeal to readers outside the UK context. In his introduction, Bradshaw emphasises 'We need to devote more resources to understanding how they are doing and to ensuring that their childhood is as good as it can be' (p. 11). This book makes a significant contribution to that end. Bradshaw ends on a sombre, foreboding note regarding the impact of further austerity measures in the UK and their inevitable damaging effect on children's well-being. In this context, clearly articulating how children are faring, as this book does, is increasingly important.

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