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Catherine Burcham, Jackie Freeman and Liz Howells reflect on how a stepped care primary mental health care service was established in Kennet and North Wiltshire

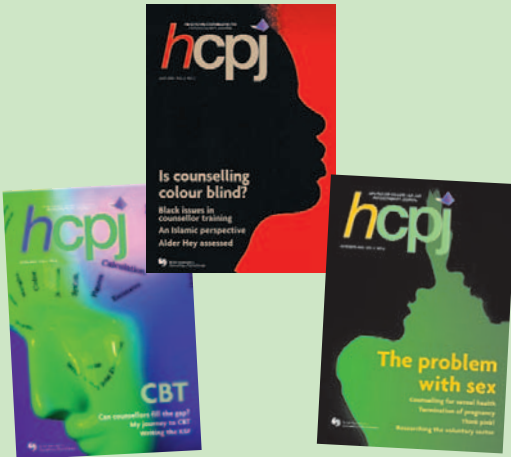
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What's in a label, and why is it so important? The question of the place and importance of labelling represents the first of two emerging strands in this edition of *HCPJ*. The disturbing article by Sami Timimi on the medicalisation of childhood eloquently deconstructs the labelling approach that has been adopted by psychiatry apparently without the support of objective evidence. One is eerily reminded of Hans Christian Andersen's story of the Emperor's new clothes. What does common sense tell us about children? How have we approached our relationship with children in the past? What was effective and useful to us in our own childhood? Western culture has gone through tremendous changes in the past 100 years, and although it is useful to acknowledge the impact of these, is it wise for us to abandon much of what would have been considered 'common sense' in the past?

The negative impact of labelling is highlighted again by Margaret Reece, who slips into her piece that '44 years previously I had been misdiagnosed with 'a schizophrenic illness' – a diagnosis of which she was unaware and which had far-reaching consequences. Similarly, Jenny Armstead and Alix Otten remind us that we need to look beyond the label of autism since this can be so disabling for those affected. This is something that we counsellors should know already, but it is as well to be reminded to constantly look beyond diagnoses and labels to reach the people who supersede them.

Every child matters is clearly something that we need to know more about, and the lead article in this issue by Sarah Catchpole reminds us clearly of the need for both specialist training and an awareness of the importance of collaboration and context – the second key theme in this edition of *HCPJ*. Alan Phillip's description of the impact of the Alder Hey debacle on the hospital staff involved reminds us of the wider fallout that can happen when such emotions are not acknowledged, as well as illustrating how they can be harnessed positively and used in organisational change. Other articles in this issue consider the context in which events happen and their significance from a variety of different angles, from that of becoming a surrogate grandmother (in the article by Angela Clark) to that of adjusting to organisational change in health care, discussed by John Hague, and the way that, according to Mike Shooter, adopting strategies of non-intervention or minimal intervention can lead to the abandonment of clinical experience in favour of political goals.

Catherine Burcham and her colleagues offer an interesting account of the primary care mental health service that they helped to develop in Kennet and North Wiltshire in our regular best practice section. There are indications here of the way that things may evolve with practice-based commissioning as it gets under way. You may also find Penny Gray's report of recent conferences run by the *Health Service Journal* informative as regards similar signs of things to come. More on this in the April issue of *HCPJ*, which will be on the theme, 'Commissioning psychological therapy services in the new NHS'. Finally we would like to draw your attention to our letters page, with its commentary on previous issues. We very much welcome your views, so please do not neglect to put pen to paper if something stirs you as you read.

John Eatock

BACP Lead Advisor for Healthcare Counselling and Psychotherapy