

Partnership Working: Policy and Practice

Balloch, S. and Taylor, M. (eds) (2001), Bristol: Policy Press, £17.99, paperback, 296 pp.

'Joined Up' thinking and the development of partnerships are high on the government's agenda, however, there are few books available that examine the nature and effectiveness of such partnerships. The difficulty is producing a text that is coherent, given the diverse range of concepts, models and settings of partnerships. This text doesn't attempt to create a set definition of partnership, but draws upon a wide range of research reports to describe and critically analyse a number of partnerships within the health and social care sector. The editors, Balloch and Taylor, have produced a challenging and carefully written critical analysis. They explore the different models and operational issues arising from the various partnerships under scrutiny. While recognising that working in partnership can provide 'added value', authors are not afraid to raise difficult questions about power, user involvement and consultation.

The book is divided into three sections. Part One looks at partnerships that are concerned with tackling social exclusion; Part Two is primarily concerned with social and health care partnerships; while the final section (Part Three) explores issues of power, participation and place. The chapters are clear and well written. The use of headings, tables and diagrams help to make what is otherwise a fairly dense text more accessible and easier to digest, though some diagrams seem unnecessarily complex. The book concentrates largely on policy and strategic issues, rather than practice and service delivery.

In Part One, Ambrose provides a helpful framework to analyse agency characteristics, and goes on to identify factors that may undermine or enhance effective partnerships. Drawing upon his research into housing renewal, he argues that the costs of ineffective partnership include, not only a less sensitive service provision, but also structural costs. Mayo and Taylor consider strategies for tackling obstacles to successful partnership, in particular they concentrate on the issue of the power imbalance with service users and communities. Pearson provides an interesting and

coherent account charting the growing and diverse development of partnerships in local government to tackle poverty, questioning why local authorities have failed to include community representation within the partnership arrangements. Reid draws upon her research, providing good insight into the key themes, issues and factors of partnership developments in social housing. Northmore continues the focus on housing partnership but in relation to the inclusion and participation from voluntary organisations that represent the interest of people with mental health difficulties.

In Part Two, Williamson sets out some useful guidelines for establishing partnerships before helpfully reflecting on some of the pitfalls and concerns learnt from two projects. Charnley looks at partnerships concerned with promoting independence for older people and draws upon user perspectives and accounts, which are too often omitted or overlooked by partnerships that seem reluctant to share power. Turner and Balloch explore and map out the development of involving service users in partnership with statutory social services, arguing that service users should be involved in defining agency outcome measures. In the final chapter in this section, Davies looks at the context of organisations and communities working together to promote health and well being.

While earlier chapters focus upon partnership in relation to particular client groups or specific areas of work, Part Three takes a different approach to partnership by focusing upon power, the dilemmas raised by multi agency policing, empowerment and spatial factors. Butt explores partnership and power with black and ethnic minority voluntary organisations. Squires and Measer examine the challenging notion of multi-agency policing. Byrne considers the meaning of empowerment and questions whether this is really achievable. Haynes ends this section with a fascinating exploration of the impact of spatial factors upon partnership. These chapters in Part Three are particularly thought provoking and have strong relevance to all partnerships.

This is a timely and useful text that genuinely seeks to get behind the rhetoric and explore the real tensions and dilemmas common in partnership working. The book does not shy away from

raising tough questions about power and political tensions, and regularly questions the lack of user perspectives and involvement within many partnerships. Indeed Charnley (pp.161-162) states:

‘successful partnerships depend upon moving away from paternalistic, disempowering models of practice in which service users are viewed as subjects of welfare systems, to models in which users and carers are active participants, supported rather than controlled by welfare professionals’

This book is highly recommended for anyone serious about understanding and developing new insights into effective partnerships. However, it is likely to have more appeal for academics, senior managers and policy makers than for students and practitioners.

42

Julian Buchanan
North East Wales Institute for Higher Education

A Handbook of Dementia Care

Cantley, C. (ed) (2001), Birmingham: Open University Press, £25, paperback, 400 pp.

Every once in a while a book comes along that makes the reader realise that there is much more to know about an area of interest than they ever thought. A Handbook of Dementia Care is one of those books. It is logically structured in three parts, beginning with a series of contributions that offer attempts to understand dementia from bio-medical, psychological, sociological, philosophical and spiritual perspectives and from the perspectives of people with dementia themselves. Subsequent contributions review the current state of practice knowledge and development, and the final part of the Handbook contains contributions that consider the policy context and how organisations can deliver better services to people with dementia and their carers. All of the contributions make interesting and rewarding reading. Each contribution offers suggested further reading, and the book also contains a very comprehensive bibliography. There will be something of interest for practitioners and managers working in health and social care

settings, policy makers, as well as students and academics.

One of the best aspects of the book is that it exposes the reader to emerging or existing perspectives from a range of different professional or academic contexts. The most useful contributions thereby transcend the sterile arguments sometimes heard about ‘social’ versus ‘medical’ models of dementia care. It is therefore difficult to single out specific contributions for consideration. Brooker offers a valuable review of therapeutic activities that considers current evidence of the effectiveness of different kinds of activity. Marshall’s paper contains a typically clear and thoughtful review of the inter-relationships between the built environments in which some people with dementia live and the care they receive, and Manthorpe offers a fascinating exploration of ethical issues. There is also an excellent review of the current policy environment by Cantley, though it seems likely that this will need to be revised before too long if it is to remain topical.

There’s little in the book to find fault with. It is sometimes said that it takes a sociologist to murder the English language and some may find the contribution by Bond rather prolix. In one or two places, otherwise excellent contributions seem slightly marred by a tendency towards polemic. For example, Innes and Capstick claim that ‘forms of linguistic expression adopted by people with dementia are widely viewed as being part of the disease process’ (p.137). Whilst this seems fundamentally correct, and can lead to a failure by professionals and carers to listen to people with dementia, it also seems possible that for some people with dementia, ‘linguistic competence’ may *actually* be lost. However, given the way many paid carers and professionals relate to people with dementia, their conclusion is quite understandable. Cantley’s review of the organisations and personnel that deliver dementia care services also seems occasionally a bit superficial. For example, in discussing the role of care staff, she concludes ‘...if better dementia care is to be promoted, more attention must be given to ensuring that care staff are valued through proper pay, support and recognition of their expertise’ (p.235). The underlying questions - why this hasn’t happened, or how it could happen, are left unanswered.

Taken in its entirety, the book offers a set of standards for practice and service development that highlight both how far we have come in our state of knowledge. By the same token, it also demonstrates how far we still have to go before all parts of the UK provide high quality services for people with dementia and their carers.

Dr John Woolham
Northamptonshire Social Care and Health Directorate

New Governance – New Democracy? Post-Devolution Wales

Chaney, P., Hall, T. and Pithouse, A. (eds) (2001), Cardiff: University of Wales Press, £14.99, paperback, 250 pp.

The series editor's opening comments in the forward to this publication - the first of what will be a series which '...will tell the unfolding story of Wales in the twenty-first century in all its complexity and detail.' - refer to the long held impression of Wales being an insignificant appendage to Britain and England. Indeed this publication itself is a valuable contribution to the growing number of publications which will help shift the gaze away from Wales' powerful neighbour on to the Welsh themselves. There is now some hope that gone are the days of the oft quoted *Encyclopaedia Britannica* – entry "for Wales, see England".

The introductory chapter by the editors is accessible and readable aiming to draw together some of the disparate subject areas covered in the following six chapters and a concluding chapter.

Each of the six chapters is based on studies undertaken at the universities of Aberystwyth, Bangor, and Cardiff, with most of the studies being funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The strong research base to this text adds much credence and validity to the text. This is important as the publication can begin to address the woeful lack of 'civic debate' in Wales, a condition perpetuated by lack of interest, will and rigour to develop a thorough understanding of the

'condition' of Wales. There is much here for policy developers and implementers, as well as those who are working in the public and business sectors in Wales. Newspaper and newsroom editors should be persuaded to see this publication as 'required reading'!

The central theme through these chapters is the impact the National Assembly for Wales is having on the relationship between the governance of Wales and its people. The editors interestingly refer to these developments as the 'devolution experiment'. This no doubt refers to the extraordinary changes in Welsh governance occurring since the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales in 1999, but also to the fragile nature of these developments as policy makers feel in the dark and the people of Wales remain sceptical. The 'experiment' description does also conjure up a picture of a 'mad-professor' or 'big-brother' controlling (or rather not controlling) what is happening.

The danger of any publication, which is made up of disparate chapters drawn from a range of authors and research studies, is that the whole does not always satisfy as the sum of its parts might suggest. Sometimes there might also be a danger of repeating materials already published in other places. Overall however the result of this team approach manages to keep to a coherent game-plan. The different chapters to a lesser or greater extent keep their eyes on the ball in relation to devolution, the decline in the physical and social 'capital' of Wales and issues of gender, disabilities and 'race'. The issue of the Welsh language, mentioned in the introductory chapter by the editors as having experienced a period of 'permanent damage' tends not to feature thereafter. This is a pity as this issues (as many others are) is in dire need of a platform which can engender a level of 'civic debate' at a time when much controversy exists.

The six chapters and research areas focus on issues of turnout and participation, excluded groups (women and disabled people, the ethnic minorities) the voluntary sector and finally economic development. Each chapter presents its research material in an interesting and accessible format. Practitioners of public and economic policies can

gain much from the information contained. There is a useful emphasis on reporting and analysis in relation to the 'silent voices' of the people of Wales. The conclusions reached point to the urgent lack of representation with the chapters on excluded groups powerfully showing the difficulties faced in developing "Inclusiveness' or *gwleidyddiaeth gynhwysol*'.

Much of the concluding evidence of the different research areas has provided a fascinating snapshot of the current situation in Wales. As any 'experiment' should point out the situation is

continually changing and developing. Once read, *New Governance – New Democracy?* leads the reader to ask for more and where now? As the first publication in a series this can only bode well for the future. The hope is however, that the current lessons learned and voices heard here will be taken on board by those who can influence this 'experiment'

William Aled Jones
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC)