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Introduction

This book focuses on two key relationships: that between housing policy and social policy, and that between the provision of housing and the provision of other welfare services such as the health service, the education system, the personal social services and the social security system. Our concern is on the one hand with the role of housing policy as social policy – that is, with the extent to which housing policy is oriented towards meeting social needs; on the other hand we are concerned with the extent to which housing as a welfare service has a bearing on the provision of other social services.

There has always been some debate as to whether housing policy should be considered to be part of social policy; social policy texts often give housing issues only cursory treatment, or exclude them altogether. Likewise, housing studies often neglect the social aspects of housing, or at least fail to place discussions about housing policy or provision in the general context of debates on social policy. This book is an attempt to address both of these areas of scholarship, by exploring trends in the provision of shelter and welfare in modern Britain.

It is true that because of the large element of private provision and consumption in housing, this facet of social welfare does not fit easily into the model of state-provided social services followed by the health and personal social services. Moreover, substantial elements of housing policy seem geared to economic or environmental rather than specifically social policy objectives, and these other concerns frequently dominate political and public debate. This apparent divergence of social policy from housing policy has tended to be reflected in the intellectual division of labour, and this has produced gaps in our understanding of how these fields relate to one

another at the levels of teaching, research and practice. The aims of this book are therefore to redress an imbalance in the literature available to students and practitioners, by concentrating on the social elements of housing policy and on the (actual and potential) relationships between the housing system and other social services.

Our starting point is a definition of social policy which clearly includes housing. By social policy we mean those areas of consumption in which the state plays a central role, either by regulating the provision of services, underwriting the cost of their provision, or providing goods and services in kind (see Hill and Bramley, 1986, for a discussion of alternatives). This definition is not uncontroversial, but it does provide a useful starting point for our discussions. In particular, it draws attention to the different mechanisms for state intervention, by including the three divisions of welfare (social, fiscal and occupational) identified by Titmuss (1956), and in consequence by including the state subsidisation of market provision (through, for example, tax relief on mortgage interest payments) as well as the direct provision of state services (through, for example, the provision of council housing). This definition places housing alongside a range of other social services without masking its unique features, but also without denying its status as, partly at least, an arm of the welfare state.

We also require a conceptualisation of housing policy in order to proceed. It could be argued that housing policy as such does not exist – that strategies which affect the quality, quantity, price and location of homes are simply the housing element of economic management. On the other hand, the regulation and manipulation of the housing stock has many aims apart from those of macroeconomic policy. We therefore regard housing policy as any form of intervention in housing production, distribution or consumption that affects the location, character and availability of homes, or the rights associated with housing occupancy – irrespective of the ownership of property, land, or the means of production.

The connections between social policy and housing policy thus defined are complex and difficult to unravel. It is not possible to offer a simple definition of the relationship between the two; rather the following chapters are explorations of this relationship and of the outcomes in terms of policy and different forms of provision which flow from it.

Throughout this book, we shall concentrate on identifying and

analysing the social elements of housing provision (those areas of housing and welfare policy impinging on the social objectives of the housing system). This focus necessarily involves consideration of the relationship between housing and other social services, if only because the production, allocation and consumption of housing is affected by, and has consequences for, other areas of social policy. These interactions often involve several agencies, including different central and local government departments as well as voluntary organisations and the private sector. For example, the recent growth in the number of homeless households, which makes increasing demands on bed and breakfast accommodation, has important implications for area health authorities, local authority social services, education, environmental health and housing departments, and for the private and voluntary sectors. Such interactions also reveal important interdependencies between policy measures in that the 'successful' implementation of a given strategy in one policy area may well depend upon the efficacy of changes or adjustments made elsewhere in the system. For example, the implementation of the care in the community policy for mentally ill people has required the co-operation of a range of agencies able to provide accommodation for patients discharged from long-stay residential institutions.

Such interactions between agencies and policies are a major focus of this book. By exploring them, we are able not only to offer insights into the power structure of democratic capitalism, but also to make suggestions as to how housing provision might work towards a more just society in the future. We begin in Chapter 1 by outlining the theoretical and conceptual framework in which our discussions are set. We review a range of competing theoretical interpretations of the place of social policy in modern liberal democracy, and argue that the most plausible of these derives from the notion of 'dual politics' as discussed by Cawson (1986) and Saunders (1986a). A reasoned understanding of what this means for the analysis and implementation of social policy is essential for a full appreciation of the argument which binds the text as a whole. However, practitioners concerned primarily with the 'nuts and bolts' of policy and practice in the areas of housing disadvantage, housing benefits, housing for the homeless, and provision for older people or people with learning difficulties, might be forgiven for reading this selectively, or leaving it until last and proceeding directly to the chapters which interest them.

Chapter 2 moves on to provide an account of the social aims of housing policy. These aims have varied in extent and orientation throughout the present century. To help the reader understand these changes, we introduce two contrasting models of social policy – a market model which suggests social aims are best pursued with a minimum of state intervention in a market economy; and a social democratic model, which argues that state intervention is required to secure a just distribution of the various rights of citizenship.

Treating these models as ‘ideal types’, we show how different views of housing – as environmental management, as a right of citizenship, and as a marketed commodity – have been variously aligned with one rather than the other at different points in time. Nevertheless, during the 1980s, we note a marked shift in all three areas of housing policy towards the market model. This is partly related to the dwindling power of representative democracy, which Offe (1984) associates with the penetration of corporate bargaining and with the bias which this has towards the interests of capital. The rest of the book considers the implications of these shifts for the implementation and effectiveness of housing and other social services.

Chapter 3 explores the changing role of housing in relation to one of the traditional aims of social policy – the alleviation of disadvantage. After examining some conceptual and definitional problems associated with this notion, we go on to illustrate how disadvantage is both expressed in, and constructed by, housing policies and their implementation. On the one hand, therefore, we show how racism, gender and class inequalities are reproduced by the apportionment of housing of different quality, condition, location and tenure. On the other hand, we argue that, because housing attainment also represents the attainment of location or neighbourhood, access to different kinds of housing also mediates access to that wide range of employment opportunities and social rights (to education, health care and other welfare services) whose quality and availability partly depends on where people live (see Pahl, 1975).

Chapter 3 recognises the extent to which the restructuring of welfare and the restructuring of the economy are spatial as well as economic and political processes. We stress, therefore, that the degree of choice and constraint experienced by individuals in the housing system has important ‘knock-on’ effects in terms of their wider life chances and opportunities. We use this evidence to argue

that housing systems do not merely reflect wider patterns of social inequality, but that they can actively exacerbate such inequality and help structure it in systematic ways. While this seems a pessimistic observation to begin with, it is also an argument that housing is a point at which intervention could, and perhaps should, be directed in any attempt to interrupt the reproduction of social disadvantage. Housing may be a key arena within society's interlocking systems of markets and institutions through which relative deprivation can be tackled.

The remaining chapters consider the extent to which this has occurred, what its achievements and limitations have been, and what this means for the relationships between housing and social policy more generally, now and in the future. Accordingly, Chapters 4 to 7 address some systematic areas of need that are conventionally identified in the analysis of social policy. In housing terms, our argument throughout the book is that the groups we examine can best be served through innovations in mainstream policy, rather than by (or at least in combination with) special initiatives. It may, therefore, seem anachronistic to treat the various grouped needs separately from the outset. We have done so for two reasons. First, we regard this systematic treatment as the most helpful way to organise our material to facilitate teaching and learning. Second, and fundamentally, it reflects the way in which the dominant model of social policy identified in Chapter 2 favours, and therefore enhances, this systematic view of special need. This 'traditional' organisation of the subject matter thus also reflects the drift of policy, capturing too the fact that where welfare professionals are able to exert influence in corporate bargaining procedures, their negotiations have often worked to sustain the status quo associated with 'special' needs provision.

The ordering of Chapters 4 to 7 is important because it exemplifies our more general argument that the market model of social policy leads to patterns of inclusion and exclusion, and to distinctions between the 'more' or 'less' deserving poor, which are stigmatising and divisive rather than integrationist and dignifying.

It is relatively easy to see why this must be the case with means-tested assistance with housing costs and with responses to homelessness. In these areas a large pool of potential beneficiaries must be reduced to a minimum if the overriding object is to minimise public expenditure and free up the market. This is achieved by developing a

fine sieve of eligibility rules and by setting a level of means-tested benefits that discourages any notions of actively chosen long-term dependence on this stigmatising form of state subsidy.

By contrast, in political terms, older people and those with learning difficulties are viewed as relatively deserving groups, excluded from the economy by age, frailty or handicap, rather than their supposed disinclination to work. Nevertheless, their treatment can also be stigmatising, in two main ways. The first is exemplified with reference to the experience of housing and community care for older people. Here, policy must cater for a relatively large, and increasing, group of potential beneficiaries. We show that, in order to justify policies which favour older people while bypassing another large group like the unemployed, older individuals have to be defined as 'special' in terms of a set of clearly delimited technical needs. Although this process is invoked to include, rather than exclude, older people from state support, we show that this can nevertheless create demeaning stereotypes, and we speculate as to whether the social 'costs' of this outweigh the benefits of what is often fairly minimal assistance. People with learning difficulties, on the other hand, are a smaller, more readily delimited group whose technical needs are pre-defined (though not uncontroversially) in medical terms. Housing and social policy both aspire to use community care as an integrative device for handicapped individuals. Nevertheless, we present evidence to suggest that even for a group whose special needs seem unequivocal, the main barriers to 'normalisation' relate not to resourcing for special needs, but to the organisation of *mainstream* housing and social policy.

Chapters 4 to 7 provide the empirical core of the book, and it is worth introducing them in some detail. Chapter 4 addresses a vital question for many areas of social policy, concerning the extent and orientation of state intervention to affect the consumer costs of different types of housing. This has ramifications throughout the welfare state, not least because much of the responsibility for means-tested assistance with housing costs now lies in the hands of the Department of Social Security (DSS). To illustrate how this has arisen, we examine the incremental mix of supply-side and demand-side interventions (through price and income subsidies, respectively) that now comprise Britain's housing finance system. We show that, on the whole, the housing subsidies now used tend to favour relatively better-off households, rather than the very poor. This can

be related to efforts to secure the predominance of market provisioning in housing, and it reflects the privileged place of capital interests in corporate bargaining at the national level. These general points are illustrated using the example of the housing benefits system.

Assistance with housing costs is important for the welfare and well-being of a large proportion of households in Britain. The organisation of such assistance makes a significant difference to who gets what kind of housing. It also impinges on the character and extent of homelessness, which is the topic of Chapter 5. The chapter begins with a historical review of homelessness in Britain, illustrating how, for policy purposes, homelessness has gradually been redefined from being a social work problem to its current status as a concern of housing policy. In the process, however, Victorian concepts of the deserving and undeserving poor appear to have been retained. This is illustrated in a critique of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, which made official the distinction between people with a right to rehousing (those among the 'unintentionally' homeless who are in priority need and, usually, have a local connection), and others (including the hidden homeless, some immigrant groups and a variety of single people and childless couples) who do not.

Chapter 5 monitors the steady increase in both official and unofficial homelessness observed in the last decade. This is creating an unprecedented burden not only on a diminishing stock of public housing, but also on other social services. Using the example of DSS board and lodging payments, we show how the government's response to homelessness appears to have undermined rather than enhanced the prospects for homeless people to gain access to permanent homes. The process of catering to the needs of the poor and homeless can usefully be contrasted with approaches to housing older people and people with learning difficulties.

Chapters 6 and 7 are both concerned with the controversial notion of community care. Chapter 6 provides a general overview of this set of policies and applies them to the case of people with learning difficulties. It is evident that the development of community care gives the housing system generally, and public housing in particular, a central role in the process of deinstitutionalisation that has become popular in Britain and other Western nations over the last fifteen years. However, the account in Chapter 6 identifies a paradoxical process whereby attempts to move away from special,

institutional provision for people with learning difficulties in social service terms has, because of the way community care is implemented, constructed 'mental handicap' as a special need in housing terms.

Reflecting the pervasiveness of this process, the main body of Chapter 6 assesses the achievements in special housing provision for people with learning difficulties, even though its accommodation still has only one-twentieth of the capacity of long-stay institutions. We provide a critique of the types of provision available, and of its planning, financing and management. We show that this is an example of care in, rather than care by, the community, in that the primary caring services associated with particular schemes are provided by paid professionals. For various reasons, this has allowed housing management to take a marginal role in the whole package of community care. The consequences for people with learning difficulties of the routine application of inflexible, impersonal, standardised procedures draws attention to a more general failure within housing management to cater to individual needs, including the individual needs of tenants with learning difficulties.

Concern about the inflexibility of the housing system in its contribution to community care leads us to conclude with a commentary on the circumstances of people with learning difficulties living outside either institutional care or special housing schemes. Here we are concerned as much with care by the community – provided by family, friends and neighbours – as with care in the community. We expose the family and gender bias in the burden of care, and link the inadequacy of state support for the informal caring role to inequalities in bargaining power between organised professionals and the caring public over the issue of welfare resources.

In exploring care by the community, we identify some organisational problems in linking housing with other service provision. Fundamentally, however, we locate many of the problems facing both people with learning difficulties and their carers in the direction of mainstream policy itself. Such policy is not flexible enough to respond to the more general difficulties of low incomes, the problems of repair and maintenance, and the space requirements that are variously experienced by the people with learning difficulties, but which also beset many other households. As a consequence, there remains an irresolvable tension between the concept of 'norma-

lisation', which seeks proper integration of people with learning difficulties into society at large, and the limited 'special needs' provision which is all the housing system can offer as a means of achieving this.

Some of the same issues arise in Chapter 7, which scrutinises the integration of housing with social policy that arises with the provision of community care for older people. This trend, too, is part of the process of deinstitutionalisation, and it is epitomised in the development of sheltered housing. During the 1970s, this package of housing and social support became the hallmark of community care for older people. Reviewing the implementation, management and effects of this kind of provision, we identify some of its most important achievements. But we also show why this package could not become the panacea for the housing and support needs of older people that was once envisaged. Moreover, the vast majority of older people are not housed in sheltered complexes, and the over-concentration of resources into this sector may be wasteful and ineffective when viewed in the context of the general needs of older individuals throughout the population.

Recognising this, Chapter 7 devotes considerable space to initiatives in housing and special care for older people in other residential contexts. As far as housing is concerned, we examine designated housing in the public sector (amenity housing), care and repair schemes for owner-occupiers, and private retirement homes. As regards the provision of special care, we assess developments in domiciliary care and the increase in community alarm systems. Given the size of the older population and the wealth that many have stored in their homes, we pay particular attention in this chapter to the potential for harnessing the market (as distinct from intervening in it) to achieve social goals.

To summarise, Chapters 4 to 7 examine four areas of housing need, selected for their helpfulness in exemplifying the range of actual, potential and desirable links both between housing and social policy more generally, and between the provision of housing and the delivery of other welfare services. We identify many areas of progress and achievement, and also some important limiting factors. In part, these are rooted in the power structure of society and in the particular set of normative guidelines which now dominate welfare provision. But they are also rooted in a (not unrelated) range of bureaucratic and organisational concerns linked to the pragmatic

problems associated with service delivery and planning. This is the theme of Chapter 8.

Chapter 8 explores the role of housing management and considers the potential for service integration. The quest for integration has been a goal of social policy for at least a quarter of a century, and we consider its importance in the context of recent trends in public rented housing. We draw attention to the processes of centralisation of decision-making and fiscal control and (in recent years) of the decentralisation and fragmentation of management. To illustrate the social consequences of these trends, we review in some detail the history of housing management and its links with other social services.

Our review exposes the extent to which public housing is being pushed towards an exclusively welfare role, and so highlights the increasing need for housing management to achieve integration with a range of other social services. We therefore examine the scope for strategic, operational and *ad hoc* case co-ordination along these lines. Where difficulties arise, they relate partly to the differing organisational norms of the various services. We also consider how far such difficulties reflect the problems of meaningful planning at a local level in a political context in which financial decisions are increasingly centralised.

Our final chapter aims to do more than summarise the findings of individual chapters. Rather, we attempt to draw from these the evidence required, first, to re-evaluate the dual politics interpretation of society and, second, to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the models of state intervention introduced in Chapter 2. We pay particular attention to the scope offered by housing provision to create opportunities for residents to participate in key decision-making processes, and so to re-activate the democratic process which is always threatened by the development of a corporate state. We conclude, therefore, by proposing what housing as social policy *could* look like in a society which places as much emphasis on individuals' social, civil and political rights as on their right to participate in the economy and to accumulate wealth.