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Community Care

Policy and Practice

**Robin Means
and
Randall Smith**

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To Joanna and Kate

Contents

<i>List of Tables and Figures</i>	x
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
<i>Guide to Reading the Book</i>	xiii
1 Introducing Community Care	1
The politics of community care	4
How many users? How many carers?	6
The legislative framework	10
Key issues in community care	14
2 From Institutions to Care in the Community: The History of Neglect	17
The long history of neglect – services for elderly people and physically disabled people	18
Services for people with mental health problems and learning disabilities	27
Explanations of neglect	34
Concluding comments	44
3 Community Care and the Restructuring of Welfare	47
The run-up to the Griffiths Report	47
The Griffiths Report	53
Reactions to the Griffiths Report	55
The White Paper on community care	57
Quasi-markets and the restructuring of welfare in Britain	60
Post-Fordism and the community care reforms	64
Conclusion	69

4	Towards User and Carer Empowerment?	71
	What is empowerment?	71
	Normalisation and ordinary living	72
	Empowerment and the disability movement	74
	Common needs? Common interests?	75
	Users versus carers?	77
	Strategies of empowerment	81
	Empowerment through ‘exit’	82
	Empowerment through ‘voice’	87
	User consultation and community care planning	90
	Rights and empowerment	96
	Conclusion	101
5	Leaders at Last: The Changing Rôle of Social Services	104
	Managing change in a climate of uncertainty	105
	Care management	109
	A mixed economy of social care	118
	Purchaser–provider splits	126
	New funding regime for community care?	129
	Conclusion	133
6	The Health Dimension of Community Care: Towards Collaborative Working?	135
	The health care and community care reforms	135
	Collaborative working: the theory	139
	Who should lead? Historical perspectives	143
	What is health care? What is social care?	147
	Hospital rundown and the politics of care in the community	150
	Achieving collaboration – key policy challenges	154

Community care planning and joint commissioning	160
Collaboration: an assessment of progress	163
7 Housing and Community Care	166
The meaning of home	166
Mainstream housing and community care	175
Supported housing	184
Towards an integrated service?	190
Concluding comments	193
8 European Perspectives on Community Care	196
The role of the family in caring	197
The place of institutional care	199
The mixed economy of welfare	203
Collaboration	205
User empowerment	207
The institutions of the European Community (Union) and policy	209
The impact of EC policies on community care	212
Concluding comments	220
9 Community Care in the 1990s: Achievements, Failures and Challenges for the Future	222
In search of achievements	223
How many problems? How many failures?	227
Future challenges: future prospects	229
Conclusion	236
<i>Guide to Further Reading</i>	238
<i>References</i>	242
<i>Index</i>	263

List of Tables and Figures

Tables

1.1	Estimate of numbers of disabled adults in Great Britain with different types of disability	7
1.2	'Pen pictures' of typical cases	8
4.1	Degrees of empowerment	81
5.1	A typology of case management arrangements in the Care in the Community Programme	115
5.2	Local authority social services department funding of non-statutory organisations as percentage of total expenditure, 1988–9	119
5.3	A simple catalogue of potential alternative modes of provision of community care	123
5.4	Social security transfer to local authorities, 1993–6	129
6.1	Establishing the responsible authority in the provision of health and social care tasks	162
7.1	The key characteristics of institutions and home	169
7.2	Number of schemes for each needs group	187
8.1	'Families are less willing to care for older relatives than they used to be' (older people only)	198
9.1	Community care in the 1990s: key skills	235

Figures

1.1	Pressures upon social services committees	13
4.1	Dimensions of empowerment through voice	89
5.1	The cascade of change	117

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Guide to Reading the Book

The aim of this book is to provide a context for and an overview of recent developments in community care in England and Wales. The examination of changes and continuities at national level is linked to specific local studies and to particular concerns about the role of the service user and carer in a mixed economy of welfare. Social services authorities have been officially designated as the lead agency for community care under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, though it is arguable whether adequate resources have been made available to carry out their responsibilities effectively. It is also the case that a range of agencies is involved in the delivery of community care and the restructuring of the welfare system has widened that range. Collaboration between agencies such as health and local authorities has never been easy, and their increasing number has made working together even more difficult.

These are among the themes of this book, which is aimed at students on courses for the caring professions, social policy students and the reflective practitioner. The story is still unfolding, but the authors argue that the continuities may be as important for understanding what is happening as the changes brought about by the reforms in the policy and practice of community care in the early 1990s.

Chapter 1 introduces the notion of community care and locates it in the politics of health and social care and in the legislative framework. The extent of need for community-based services is examined and the chapter ends with a scrutiny of the key issues addressed in the book. Chapter 2 offers a perspective of community care over time and suggests that there has been a long history of neglect in the development of non-institutional services. Differing explanations for this neglect are outlined. Chapter 3 places community care in the contemporary context of the restructuring of welfare in the UK, starting in the mid-1980s with the run-up to the 1988 Griffiths Report, which offered an agenda for action, and following developments through the 1989 White Paper and the 1990 legislation and its associated policy guidance. The notions of post-Fordism and quasi-markets are introduced as plausible explanations for the direction in which policy change has gone. These notions also underlie the theme of Chapter 4, which reflects on whether the

reforms are likely to lead to increased involvement and participation on the part of the consumers of services – users and carers. The first part of the chapter examines ideas about normalisation and ordinary living and also focuses on the contribution to the empowerment debate of the disability movement. The second half outlines various strategies of empowerment, covering ‘exit’, ‘voice’, consultation and rights.

Chapter 5 looks at the problems faced by the local authority social services department as lead agency in implementing the community care reforms. The uncertain political and financial climate provides a backcloth to a commentary on care management, the implications of a mixed economy of welfare, the concept of the purchaser–provider split and the emergence of a new funding regime for community care. Chapter 6 wrestles with the decades-old problem of collaboration between care agencies, particularly health and social care. It summarises theoretical approaches to collaborative working and the arguments about the differences between health and social care. The policy decision to close the long-stay institutions is examined for its impact on working together, including collaboration at the levels of planning and commissioning services. Chapter 7 looks at the part to be played by housing in the community care context, both supported and mainstream housing. In relation to the latter, issues of availability, affordability, repair and adaptations are examined in some detail, as this has traditionally been a neglected aspect of community care. The chapter ends with a comment on the prospects for an integrated service.

Chapter 8 outlines some of the community care issues faced by some other member states of the European Community, particularly Greece, Germany, Italy and Denmark. A number of themes are pursued, including the role of the family in caring, the part played by institutional care, working together, user empowerment and the salience of the mixed economy of welfare arguments. In the second part of the chapter, the institutions of the European Community are described briefly, together with an outline of the EC policy process. The impact of particular EC policies on community care are followed through in relation to older and disabled people and in terms of the agencies, such as local authorities, which are providers of community care. Finally Chapter 9 takes an overview on achievements so far, problems to be faced and the likelihood of policy failure. It ends with a summary of future challenges and future prospects.