Social Work and Community Care

Also by Malcolm Payne

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Malcolm Payne

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Foreword and Acknowledgements

This book is concerned with the practice consequences of policy developments in community care following the *National Health Service and Community Care Act, 1990*. Social workers and their managers and policy-makers ought to see practice in the context of policy and organisation, and policy and organisation can only be understood as they are expressed through practice or at least the potential for it. It is unsatisfactory to explore policy without understanding the reality of the practice which will emanate from it. This view, which I hold very strongly, requires a better understanding of practice possibilities and options drawn from professional literature and understanding than we are accustomed to see in policy-oriented books. The corollary, that practice must come from a good understanding of the implementation of policy, is better appreciated. Nevertheless, in the social services of the early 1990s, policy-analysis related to practice seems to me to have two faults. It is either so critical as to be hostile to the innovation, or it derives from the government's own analysis of its policy, converted into practice and policy guidance and reinforced by selectively funded research. To be helpful, we must be constructively critical of the policy context of practice innovations. Yet we must try to understand what they mean for practice and how they might be implemented, even if at the same time we must be doubtful of their value.

This book also reflects my long-standing commitment to the exploration and understanding of practice. After the publication of the Barclay Report (1982), I wrote a book called *Social Care in the Community* (Payne, 1986a), in which I tried to analyse and describe the social work skills involved in 'social care planning', which was the Report's term for social work activities contrasted with 'counselling'. Skills such as enabling, negotiating, mobilising resources,

networking and advocacy are as crucial in social work as the more therapeutic aspect of 'treatment' through counselling-type work, but are much less valued, less realised in accounts of social work practice and less taught than 'counselling'. The interest in anti-discriminatory work in the late 1980s and various advocacy movements have led to a strong development of empowerment and advocacy theory and writing, which was briefly presaged in my 1986 book.

Anxiety about policy issues such as community care plans, resource delegation and organisational and management reform seems to be leading to a neglect of the opportunities of the new community care system for doing more interesting and positive work for neglected groups of clients and their carers. Directors of social services have told me that training must concentrate on budgeting and management rather than on how to help people in the community in more imaginative ways. I hope this is just a characteristic of the setting-up phase of a new policy, but I fear that it reflects a longstanding attitude in the British social services that having good systems of organisation is the only thing needed for good services. Training and research funds so often follow this twisted view of the world, when the creativity of what social workers actually do in relationships with members of the public is just as important for the quality of services, if not more so. It seems that no amount of child care scandals has yet taught us that rigorous procedures, carefully implemented, have to be supplemented by putting sensitive, genuine, creative people into relationships with the public and supporting, training and enabling the use of their skills. To do this, we need a clear understanding of what professional practice can offer in a new policy context. That is what this book is about. It is based on my experience over the last ten years of the voluntary and community sector particularly in Liverpool and Manchester, and my period of development work in mental health with the Richmond Fellowship, and I am very grateful for the ideas and learning that I have gained from the people I have worked with.

I wish to acknowledge the technical help of Kathy Woods, of the Manchester Metropolitan University Computer Services Unit, and help and advice from my teaching colleagues Tony Sargeant and Simon Goodwin, practitioner colleague Jane Dalrymple and the ideas and experience of my 1992 masters class in care management.