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Community Care

Policy and Practice

Second Edition

Robin Means and Randall Smith

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To Joanna and Kate

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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 rôle of the service user and carer in a mixed economy of welfare. Social services authorities were 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 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’, ‘rights’ and ‘struggle’.

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 the progress so far made by social services in implementing care management, developing a mixed economy of welfare, introducing the purchaser–provider split and in developing community care planning. 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. Key issues are addressed such as the co-ordination of mental health services, the provision of continuing care and joint commissioning. 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 Union, particularly Greece, Germany, Italy and Denmark. A number of themes are pursued, including the rôle 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 Union are described briefly, together with an outline of the EU 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 in the context of an election of a Labour government. It concludes with a plea for local authorities to develop a broader vision of community care.