

Book review

Health and social care: establishing a joint future

Alison Petch

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Irrespective of national context and the precise nature of local services, most developed nations are currently exploring different ways of developing more integrated health and social care. Responding to demographic changes, advances in medicine and technology, and rising public expectations, health and social care systems are increasingly recognising that greater partnership working is one of the only ways forward. In the UK, this is summed up by New Labour's regular mantra about creating 'joined-up solutions to joined-up problems', or by the more controversial decision of a previous Health Secretary to describe the relationship between health and social care as a 'Berlin Wall'. Against this background, Alison Petch's book, *Health and Social Care: Establishing a Joint Future*, provides a short (96 pages) but invaluable overview of the issues at stake.

Drawing on Scotland's Joint Future agenda as a detailed case study, the book begins with a more general overview of key concepts, issues of definition, the rationale for partnership working and the evidence base behind current policy and practice. Given that this is notoriously difficult terrain, this opening chapter is a masterpiece of clarity and a helpful introduction for anyone new to the topic. After this, Petch reviews the development of health and social care partnerships in the UK (Chapter 2). While this may be too

detailed for a non-UK audience, it will nevertheless be of interest to those who want to know about specifics of UK policy. Following on from this, Chapter 3 focuses in particular on Scotland, including the creation of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 and the publication of Scotland's Joint Future report in 2000. Chapter 4 then explores progress in key policy areas such as single shared assessment, local partnership agreements and joint performance assessment. After this, Chapter 5 brings the story fully up to date with a consideration of the development of an outcomes-based approach and other recent policy priorities. Finally, Chapter 6 provides a summary and critique of the Joint Future agenda, highlighting a series of ongoing tensions in partnership policy and practice.

Overall, this is an excellent summary of partnership working in general and of Scottish health and social care partnerships in particular. Although it will be especially relevant for Scottish policy makers, managers and practitioners, it may also provide a useful case study for people from other systems. Even from an English perspective, the book provides a helpful introduction to some neglected but important policy developments that should have received greater attention across the UK as a whole.

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