

Book review

Partnership working in health and social care (Better partnership working series)

Jon Glasby, Helen Dickinson
Bristol: The Policy Press, 2008, 108 pp
ISBN 978 1 84742 016 9

This book provides a practical and concise introduction to the literature on partnership working in health and social care for students, practitioners, policy makers and managers. Partnerships have appeal internationally as a means to integrate health and social services in response to the realization that both sectors serve populations whose complex needs cannot be met adequately through segmented approaches. The content is presented within the context of the UK where working together is legislated to promote cross-boundary work and break down traditional barriers to collaboration.

The book is sectioned into five chapters that cover what partnerships are and their relevance within health and social care, an analysis of the state of knowledge on partnerships, an overview of selected issues and debates associated with partnerships, a brief explanation of particular frameworks and concepts that could serve as useful guides for those in partnerships and a concluding chapter containing recommendations for policy and practice.

The content deals with a breadth of literature both theoretical and empirical on partnerships. Relevant references are embedded throughout the text to facilitate further in-depth exploration by the reader. Practical examples are used throughout the book to further illuminate the issues covered in the text. Reflective exercises are positioned at the end of each chapter to stimulate the reader to think about or apply the material within their particular context. Additional references for further reading and helpful resources conclude each chapter.

This book is the first in a series of five partnership 'how to' books. As an introductory book on partnership working, it provides the reader with quick and easy access to a breadth of literature. Although the content is more focused on the issues from the social care perspective than the health care perspective it is well laid out and presented.

The book begins well with a brief historical review to situate expectations related to partnership policies

in the UK. The authors then point out the plethora of terms used to describe partnerships and how this adds to definitional or conceptual confusion. They provide clarity by identifying the key characteristics of partnerships but do not explicitly apply these characteristics to create a unified understanding of what they mean as they proceed to use the term 'partnership' throughout the book.

The authors clearly point out that although partnerships are expected to redefine the delivery of health and social care the evidence-base on how partnerships function and their impact on outcomes is lacking. They unequivocally delineate the complexities of partnership work and frequently warn the reader of the possibility that expectations for partnerships may be unrealistic. The book provides a good overview of the partnership literature relevant to the UK context and its shortcomings. It provides a rather generic approach to the discussion of partnerships and leaves it to the reader to determine which content is relevant for their context. The critical analysis within the book does not include in-depth analyses of concepts or critical reviews of the frameworks/tools provided.

We enjoyed reading the book. The authors did an admirable job of simplifying a very broad and complex literature while maintaining a practical lens. It has particular value for students not only as an introduction to the partnership literature but also as a key source for current references. We found the myriad of concepts and terms in the first chapter particularly challenging to manoeuvre through. The authors' message would have been clearer if they had clarified the meanings of the terms introduced here that were used repeatedly throughout the remainder of the book. There was also redundancy in the examples in Chapter 1 which could have been used to free up space for the content.

This book merits reading by students, practitioners, policy makers and managers in the UK wishing to learn more about the current literature and debates surrounding partnership work. The authors do a good job of pointing out the complexities of partnership work and provide much food for thought by those building or involved in partnerships. Much of the content is relevant to audiences outside the UK.

We give the book an overall rating of 3.5 out of 5.

*Gail Butt, RN, MHSc, PhD (c)
Adjunct Faculty, School of Nursing, University of British
Columbia, Associate Director, BC Hepatitis Services
BC Centre for Disease Control,
655 West 12th Avenue, Vancouver, BC, V5Z 4R9 Canada*

*Liza McGuinness (MA)
Research Manager, BC Hepatitis Services,
BC Centre for Disease Control,
655 West 12th Avenue, Vancouver, BC,
V5Z 4R9 Canada*