

ventures are given in each chapter but the vignettes describing them do not come to life and, more importantly, no evidence is given as to their effectiveness, even though the text throughout rightly dwells on the importance of goal setting and evaluation. The contents of the handbook are, in general, anodyne, unfocused and unrelated to health gain areas.

It is hard to envisage the likely readership of this handbook other than those employees in health and local authorities delegated to work on *The Health of the Nation* targets. Now that local governments are programmed for massive re-organisation, social services are striving to implement the Community Care Act, and health services are still struggling to come to terms with the implications of GP fundholding, trusts and purchaser/provider splits, it seems unlikely that much energy will be expended on 'healthy alliances'!

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Reshaping Mental Health Services: implications for Britain of US experience. King's Fund Institute Research Report 16. By Judy Turner-Crowson. 1993. £12.00. Available from Bournemouth English Book Centre, PO Box 1496, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset BH12 3YD

The United Kingdom is travelling down the same path of community psychiatric development as in the United States, but the Americans are some years ahead of us and we could learn from their

experiences. This report analyses several of the key questions in the debate on the shifting of institutional to community psychiatric care. It addresses many of the issues that concern us all, and describes them in great depth and eloquence. I find that there is little that is contentious in the analysis of the problems that we face.

In finding solutions, the report stands on weaker ground. Six key issues for the future emerge: clarifying the vision of what needs to happen, involving stakeholders, applying a systems approach, mobilising effective leadership, realigning budget-holding and financial structures, and facilitating continuous learning from experience. Much of it comes down to having a clarity of vision to move forward in a consistent direction so that all pull together with a coherent purpose. An umbrella organisation to coordinate activities towards community care is suggested. What we actually have is fragmentation of the service into small trusts, and a division of responsibility between health, social services and the judicial agencies etc. Although the suggestions are reasonable, my impression has been that changes result from diverse forces acting independently of each other rather than in response to a grand plan.

To quote, 'In this atmosphere, whether mental health services develop coherently or disintegrate remains a matter of concern and continued debate'.

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