

Book Review: People Before Profit: The Future of Social Care in Scotland by Social Work Action Network (SWAN) & the Jimmy Reid Foundation

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Book Review: *People Before Profit: The Future of Social Care in Scotland* by Social Work Action Network (SWAN) & the Jimmy Reid Foundation

Natalia Farmer

In the jointly published *People Before Profit: The Future of Social Care in Scotland* by the Social Work Action Network and the Jimmy Reid Foundation, it is apt that the introducing sentiment reminds us that 'every crisis also brings forth opportunity' (Ferguson and Gall, p.3). 2020 was marked by the turbulence of Covid-19 and the controversial numbers of Covid related deaths in Scottish residential care homes prompted the Scottish Government commissioned Feeley Independent Review of Social Care. This pamphlet takes up both the crisis and the recommendations within the review by drawing attention to the voices and experiences of those significantly affected by the pandemic over the last year. However, in contrast to the Feeley Review, which despite identifying the need for a National Care Service, still embraces the 'role to be played by profit-seeking private business' (p.3), this pamphlet boldly takes a different perspective. Drawing from a wide variety of contributions, the central argument rests upon the necessity of a 'nationalised' care service, free from marketization and run on the basis of need rather than profit.

In the first of five sections, 'Covid and Social Care in Scotland: What went Wrong?', any assumptions that suggest the Scottish Government managed the pandemic in a superior way to the UK Government are shattered. In particular, Ewart (p.10) troubles notions that portray Scotland as 'ahead of the curve' in relation to human rights by highlighting that despite the establishment of a Scottish Commission for Human Rights (SHRC), that reality on the ground was indeed grim. Failings included the removal of home care from disabled people without assessment, higher than average emergency detentions, older people discharged from hospitals without Covid-19 tests and reports that Do Not Resuscitate Orders (DNR) were implemented without consultation with families (p 7-9). Following this, the next three sections are the strength of this pamphlet and the prioritisation of voices from those with lived experience will appeal to readers of *Critical Social Policy*. Specifically, attention is drawn to the relationship between social policy and grass-roots activism by documenting various campaigns, such as 'The Save Bield' (p.34) campaign, formed in response to the closure of residential care homes.

For me, Qureshi's harrowing account of the realities of UK immigration policy stand out as she confronts the struggles for social justice for those from refugee and migrant backgrounds living in Glasgow. By prioritising the lived experience of this marginalised group, Qureshi documents the

traumatic consequences of the immigration system as she provides a tragic account of three high profile deaths in Glasgow during lockdown (p. 15-16). Finally, the concluding sections focus upon questions surrounding what a national care service might look like, going beyond mere slogans or aspirations (Smellie, p. 44). The importance of bringing together stakeholder such as trade unions, frontline workers, community activists is emphasised, alongside calls to 'begin dismantling the capitalist system' and 'reverse inequalities' (Mckenna, p.52).

However, while this pamphlet makes it clear the emphasises is upon the social care system in a broad sense, there remains a heavy focus in relation to adults and those looking for an analysis highlighting the effects of the pandemic in other areas of care, such as children and families might be disappointed. Similarly, despite the significant rise of domestic abuse referrals within Adult Social Services during Covid-19, this is a notable omission that I would have liked to have seen addressed. Additionally, given this pamphlet will appeal towards those working within the social care sector, I recommend reading this in conjunction with Turbett's (2021) 'Struggling to Care: Why Scotland Needs to Reform the Role of Social Workers'. Both tackle the need for a National Care Service in Scotland, yet Turbett provides particular detail in relation to how this might be achieved within social work practice, with a focus upon the return of 'community social work'.

To recap, I welcome the excellent contributions that are clearly committed to bringing about change. This is an important read that I hope will stimulate national discussion and mobilise campaigners to call for action that demands more than just a National Care Service, but a 'nationalised' care service in Scotland. One that is shaped democratically from the bottom up free from marketization to ensure that 'care workers and care users are in the driving seat' (p.3). To echo Ferguson and Galls introductory sentiment, our current moment in history of 'crisis' is replete with challenges, yet this also brings forth the opportunity to transform some of the most prevalent contemporary social injustices we face within society.

Reference

Turbett C (2021) *Struggling to Care: Why Scotland Needs to Reform the Role of Social Workers*. Glasgow: Common Weal Policy.