

Book Review

Zoe Van Zwanenberg, Ed. (2010). Leadership in social care. Leadership in residential care. London, Jessica Kingsley, 240pp. ISBN: 978 1 84310 969 3 £22.99

Leadership in Residential Child Care. A paper commissioned by the National Centre for Excellence in Residential Child Care.

Adrian Ward London, The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, 2009, 102pp. Free.

www.ncb.org.uk/ncercc/ncercc%20practice%20documents/ncercc_leadership.pdf

The articles in Leadership and Social Care and the paper by Adrian Ward examine the current interest in leadership in general, and the growing interest in leadership in social care and residential care. The work by Adrian Ward is a useful paper that complements the book as it focuses on leadership in relation to the daily life of residential care and offers a practical insight into the many related functions.

The book is separated into three parts with contributions from social work professionals, academics and independent researchers. Part 1 is split into four chapters focusing on leadership of the social work profession. The first chapter provides a summary of the 21st Century Review of Social Work; within this section there is also some focus on the leadership role of service users, carers and citizens. The second chapter provides interesting case studies on practitioner leadership. It acknowledges that the leadership role is open to all practitioners and often is situationally based. The case studies highlight that a person promoting an improvement or change in response to feedback might take a leadership role, or an individual may have an interest in a particular service area and wish to see improvements. Leadership in this circumstance is more contextual or situational. This chapter also begins to consider a leadership model for social care.

The third chapter considers the relationship between supervision, management and leadership, attempting to conceptualise and define the difference between leadership and management. The context of the fourth chapter begins by considering key reports, policy documents and legislation in which the need for, or lack of leadership in social care is highlighted. A key message from Part 1 of the book is that for leadership in a social care context to be effective, leaders must embrace a creative agenda and encourage others to do so also. Much of Part 1 reflects work from Scotland, the issues and themes addressed, however, are relevant across the UK. There is a lot to like about Part 1: it does focus on leadership within social care rather than leadership generally. It also places leadership within context and considers the leadership role that each individual within the social care professions can and does play.

Part 2, entitled 'Leadership for Collaborative Advantage', comprises four chapters and develops the notion of partnership thinking further, identifying what the leadership role looks like in this context. There is a description and analysis of the development of

partnership working in Chapter 1 and an acknowledgement that there is an increasing requirement on local authorities and others to work in partnership. A key message is not that partnerships should become an end in themselves, but should be the means to ensure better outcomes for service users and their carers. Part 2 also begins to consider some new thinking about partnership working, collaboration and leadership. It implies that new ways of working in the public services are demanding a different approach to leadership and management, one that shifts the focus from the lines of responsibility and accountability to more complex arrangements. The purpose of Part 2 is to consider how managerial leaders can successfully develop collaborative leadership, as collaborative leadership is required at all levels in social care. It is necessary because complex problems, risk and uncertainty require people to work consistently and cost-effectively to support people with complex needs. Although there was agreement in each chapter about the importance of collaborative leadership, it was also stated that this does not reduce the significant obstacles that can undermine people's commitment to working together for improved outcomes.

Part 3 considers the crucial area of leadership development, highlighting the concept of leadership as something not just residing in formal leaders and managers, but as an expectation of all workers at all levels. Five chapters comprise Part 3, which looks at learning frameworks and what knowledge we can glean from other professional groups who are developing leadership programmes. The initial chapter in Part 3 focuses on the Continuous Learning Framework and provides an overview of the overarching aims of the framework. Subsequent chapters look at leadership development in social work and identify lessons from health leadership. Part 3 purports that the current challenge for social care is to have a workable vision as to what is meant by leadership, and then to devise a development plan to help as many people as possible develop leadership skills.

The key message from all three parts of this book is that leadership in Scotland's social care profession is important. It is important because it makes a difference to outcomes for service users and carers as well as affecting the development and morale of workers in social care. I enjoyed the book. The layout and structure of each of the three parts lends itself to the reader being able to dip in and out of the various chapters.

The paper by Adrian Ward offers an insight into the relationship based-approach to leadership in residential child care, focusing on the interactions between the leader, the staff teams, young people and the outside world. It was commissioned by the National Centre for Excellence in Residential Care, and is helpful in outlining the role of leadership in the daily life of residential homes and units. It highlights the many tasks of the unit managers and the crucial leadership role they play in enabling staff, in being physically present and accessible to support staff emotionally, and the almost impossible juggling act they perform in attending to the internal and external worlds. Chapter 1 begins with some personal reflections from Ward regarding his own journey into a leadership role. This chapter paints a picture for the reader about some of the difficulties and dilemmas encountered in becoming established as a leader. Ward's honest account in which he describes some painful and challenging situations in dealing with young people and staff provide the reader with a clear view of how the designated leader can be tested on many

different levels. The clear message from this chapter is that the leader needs to establish and develop a culture in which people can work together and be clear about the tasks.

Chapter 2 provides some useful definitions of leadership and what leaders do. Consideration is given to the question of leadership style, in particular charismatic and transformational leadership styles. This chapter nicely weaves in the idea of the 'use of self' in relation to the leader being aware of what different leadership styles should be adopted when dealing with different situations - the key message being that leadership is complex and requires the leader to move between competing tasks and adjust the way they work to complete these tasks. Chapter 3 begins to explore what goes on beneath the surface of leadership, in the unconscious interactions that take place. I found this the most personally challenging chapter as I struggled with the notions of projection, transference and counter-transference. The rational and logical side of me found it difficult to imagine that unconscious feelings can be evoked in interactions which the leader has with others, i.e. how these interactions may remind a staff member of previous relationships and trigger unconscious reactions. Ward did, however, provide a useful explanation of psychodynamic theory which did make me think about what happens 'below the surface' and how this could have importance alongside the logical approaches in helping make sense of challenging situations or powerful emotions that are evoked.

Chapter 4 examines the many roles that a leader has to take on, and the challenges in meeting competing responsibilities. The next chapter moves into looking at interactions between the leader and the team, with the needs of the young people being central to this. Ward considers the high levels of felt and expressed emotion in a residential unit and how this can lead to an environment that can flare up over sometimes apparently trivial incidents. This chapter explores the role of the staff and the leader in handling incidents as they arise, but also the ability of the team to predict situations and defuse them. I found this chapter particularly useful and I have encouraged the staff team at my own unit to read it. For me it was a fantastic reminder that the daily life of residential care is not just something that ticks along whilst we are doing rotas or daily recordings. It is the fact that things happen in the way that they do that matters. It is about, for example, the way in which a young person is encouraged to attend school or is welcomed when they return home. These everyday things are what matters and how we do this is crucial in building trusting relationships with young people.

Chapter 6 explores values by considering the themes of power, prejudice and dependency, drawing particular attention to gender and sexuality. The notion of considering what is happening at both a conscious and unconscious level threads through this chapter. The final chapter focuses on the role of the leader as a person and how isolating this role can be.

I thoroughly enjoyed this paper and feel it is essential reading for every residential unit. I found myself laughing, close to tears and nodding my head in complete agreement as I read the paper. Most of all it struck a chord with me as I could relate to Adrian's journey into leadership in residential care. I had my small criticism around the use of psychodynamic theory, but it has got me thinking about what might be happening beneath the surface of interactions between myself and others.

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