

elderly and the debilitating effects of ageism, there lingers an impression of a 'gung-ho' approach that encourages a certain scepticism. Nevertheless, the stimulus is still there, inviting the involvement and commitment of the reader.

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Neil Howell, Duncan Boldly, Barry Smith, *Allocating the home help services*, London, Bedford Square Press, 1979. 110 pp. £4.50. ISBN 0 7199 10269.

Paul Chapman, *Unmet needs and the delivery of care: a study of the utilisation of social services by old people*, Bedford Square Press, London, 1979. 110 pp. £3.95. ISBN 0 7199 0962.

Both these publications are volumes within the series, Occasional Papers on Social Administration published for the Social Administration Research Trust by the Bedford Square Press of the National Council of Voluntary Service. The purpose of this series is to provide a vehicle of publication for research studies. It is hoped moreover that the series provides a link between research workers or academics and administrators.

The two monographs are concerned with the delivery of services to elderly people but both have quite different emphases. Howell and his colleagues present a model for the efficient allocation of one particular resource currently available to old people namely the home help service. Their brief appears to be an examination of the *efficiency* of this service; they do not discuss the wider and more basic questions of *effectiveness*. Chapman on the other hand is concerned with such questions of effectiveness but does not deal with the internal efficiency of welfare organizations.

Howell and his fellow researchers are either associated with or members of the Institute of Biometry and Community Medicine at the University of Exeter. Bemoaning the lack of a management science orientation to the delivery of personal social services they aim to make good this deficiency by presenting an operational research approach to resource allocation. Their particular task is to improve the system of allocating home help hours in Cornwall Social Services Department's jurisdiction so as to remove the territorial injustice built into the system. It is well known throughout the social services that resources are distributed on an area basis rather than a needs basis. The contention, however, of their study is that the provision of home help to individual clients should not depend on the particular area where they live but only on their requirements so that a client in one area should receive the same level of provision as a *similar* client in any other area.

The authors propose a simple formula for the rational allocation of home help hours which reflects this principle of equity. The numbers of each type of client in each area multiplied by their corresponding levels of provision give the number of 'work' hours (amount of contact time) required by each area. An additional allowance is then made for travel time, etc. the result being the total hours required by each area given its existing mixes of types of client. Further adjustment can be made to allow for different population

structures and the availability of other resources complementary to the home help service. Data for the model was provided by a survey of home helps and home help organisers carried out by the research team.

The Exeter researchers have produced a simple but useful tool which could be employed by an administrator concerned with the allocation of any welfare resource. The criticism of the approach must surely lie in its static or conservative nature. Resource allocation in the social services must be concerned with effectiveness as well as efficiency – with questions such as – why the home help service? What good does it do? The authors only consider the relative number of hours in each area in Cornwall; they do not question the absolute size of home help resource allocation.

Paul Chapman describes an action research project that was conducted between 1970–71 in the City of Westminster. It is sad that the delay in publication has been so great. The project workers from the organization Task Force initially interviewed over five hundred elderly people in the borough and concluded that 46 per cent of these had unmet needs. These needs were then referred to relevant statutory and voluntary workers by the Task Force team. A follow-up study six months later discovered that less than half of the needs which had been identified and articulated were being met.

The team had hypothesized at the outset that the major reason for the existence of the phenomenon of unmet needs was that of poor communication between potential client and agency. They confess to an early naivety. Although poor communication channels certainly did exist in the borough at the time of the survey a more potent explanation for the research findings is the irrelevancy of much social provision to old people. Old people have sets of problems or needs but they do not always perceive society's response to these needs to be relevant to them.

In a final chapter of the book Chapman lists and discusses the main factors which contribute to the problem of access to welfare services – he deals with health, financial and general social needs in less detail. – poor publicity of services, proliferation of services and benefits, complicated application procedures, control and rationing by gatekeepers such as social workers and doctors, psychological factors on the part of old people themselves, etc. Chapman discusses solutions to the unmet need problem and rejects as being unnecessarily discriminating the screening or at risk register approach.

This study should be welcomed as a good attempt to discuss the gap between need and demand. It perhaps does not go far enough. Having employed the concept of felt need – only the individual recipient can assess his needs with any validity. The research then to some extent turns its back on the concept. The study assumes as so many others do a neat and obvious connection between 'needs' and 'resources'. The needs which the team investigated are not so much needs in the sense of being self-articulated statements about individual circumstances but rather resources. The interview schedule employed expressed need in terms of service or benefit labels such as a need for home help services or a need for meals on wheels.

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