Strictly Come Partnering: A new dawn for public health or poisoned chalice?

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Towards a New Harsher Future?

The coalition programme…involves a restructuring of…public services that takes the country in a new direction, rolling back the state to a level of intervention below that in the United States – something which is unprecedented. Britain will abandon the goal of attaining a European level of public provision. The policies include substantial privatisation and a shift of responsibility from state to individual.

Taylor-Gooby and Stoker, The Political Quarterly (2011)
The Road to the Future?

Source: Gareth Morgan
Public Health and the NHS: a difficult relationship

While the NHS claimed from the outset to give high priority to the promotion of health... in reality this aspect of the service was never more than weakly developed, notwithstanding claims to the contrary, habitually made in ministerial speeches.

Charles Webster (1996)
Local Government: public health’s natural home

Many people in local government believe it is their organisations, rather than health authorities, that are public health authorities.

Tony Elson (1999)
The Main Determinants of Health

Source: Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991
What Determines a Successful Partnership?

- Clear purpose, common aims, goals, objectives
- The right partners who can contribute and commit
- Ability to have an honest dialogue about each partner’s contribution
- Trust and relationships
- Leadership – integrative, adaptive
A Paradigm Shift: Systems Thinking and Partnerships

- Public health partnerships tackle ‘wicked problems’
- Lessons from complex adaptive systems – power for creativity and innovation lies within the relationships among the parts of a complex system
- Adoption of more flexible approach – looser, dynamic, less structured, ability to adapt to changing circumstances
- Development of collaborative leadership initiatives
Rethinking Leadership

- Collective intelligence, not individual genius
- Accept the reality of ‘wicked problems’
- Work with uncertainty
- Shift from providing answers to asking the questions
- Encourage positive deviance in place of negative acquiescence
A Note of Caution

- If the past is any guide, the omens are not good
- Power of the ‘legacy model’ remains strong
- Structural change in preference to cultural change holds sway
- Achieving change on the scale needed – jury is out
To Conclude: A ‘Gentle’ Challenge

- The past hasn’t been so great – work for a better future
- Go for integrative and adaptive leadership
- Don’t become (or remain) fixated on structure and governance
- Encourage positive deviance
5 Questions to Ask Yourself

Do the interactions among the various parts of the complex system generate energy and innovative ideas for change, or do they drain the system?
Are decisions about change made rapidly and by the people with the most knowledge of the issue, or is change bogged down in hierarchy and position-authority?
Do individuals and groups acquire and exercise power in positive, constructive ways toward a collective purpose, or is power coveted and used mainly for self-interest and self-preservation?
Are conflicts and differences of opinion embraced as opportunities to discover new ways of working, or are these seen as negative and destructive?
Is the system naturally curious and eager to learn more about itself and about what might be better, or is new thinking viewed mainly as potentially risky and threatening to the status quo?
The Road to the Future?

Source: Gareth Morgan
The Road to the Future!

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Thank You!