"At risk, yet dismissed": Discuss the importance of a multi agency approach to the policing of mental health.

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Multi- agency approach

- Suggested multi agency approaches, often focus on drawing together the skills and resources various organisations to create the most appropriate and cost affective processes and set up.
- These approaches may include various emergency services, including the police force, they may also involve NHS trusts and local charities
- Example includes: Dyfed-Powys Police, who run a triage service, which involves an officer and a mental health professional working together from 4pm to midnight to visit the homes of anyone calling 999

Factors to consider

- Multi agency approaches are often an innovative and cost affective way of responding to complex societal issues such as mental health. However the nature of multi agency work means there are some factors that may hinder effectiveness. These include:

    - Differing goals/aims
    - Funding differences/ agreement on where to spend money
    - Political nature of organisations, including hierarchy, managerialism and targets
    - Logistical issues in terms of being able to meet to discuss the work involved or being far apart in terms of location
    - Differing work culture in terms of policy and practices, but also physically how the work will be carried out

Policing of mental health

"Mental health services are in crisis and we police struggle to pick up the slack"

- The number of calls handled by the Metropolitan police in which someone was concerned about a person's mental health hit a record 115,000 in the last year: on average 315 a day, or about 13 an hour.
- 60% increase in referrals to NHS mental health crisis teams but these services have had a cut in their funding." (Guardian, 2017)
- Chief Constable: Mark Collins, draws attention to how an increase in mental health calls is preventing his officers from dealing with crimes, he also states how the lack of out of hours options for people has exacerbated the issue.
- There is also a question raised in this debate regarding to what extent mental health cases are the responsibility of the police, especially if there are no crimes being committed.
- Police officers are not mental health professionals and by placing mental health cases within a policing setting, there is the risk of framing those with mental health issues as criminals, when in fact there are little other options for police officers in terms of their response to such calls.

Mental health as a "wicked problem"

- The issue of mental health can be described as a wicked problem - as described by Rittel - in the sense that each case is often very complex and may involve many different factors and behaviors. As such the previous approach to applying a tame based more singular approach to the problem is proving to be ineffective, as issues regarding mental health often do not fit into a prescribed mold.
- This indicates that a multi agency approach to mental health is needed due to the complex nature of the problem itself, and the differing levels of knowledge available.

Pluralisation of Policing

Adam Crawford- *Plural Policing*

- As public policing is essentially a free service to those who call upon it there is potentially infinite demand. This demand combined with lack of resources has resulted in the privitisation and pluraisation of policing.
- In addition services provided are expanded and outsourced to third party providers and the service has expanded to include new roles including PSCOs
- Yet the task of maintaining reliable public reassurance still falls upon the police

Challenges of Privatisation

- Public values and the traditional role of the police often clashes with the idea of police work, particularly in the security sector, being outsourced to third parties
- Effective co-partnerships are often at the Liberty of clashing aims, work practices and resources
- Impact on public view of police, which is challenging when reassurance has become a key mandate in modern policing

References
- Rittel, H.W. and Webber, M.M., 1973. 2.3 planning problems are wicked. *Polity*, *4*, pp.155-169
- Crawford, A. 2012. Plural policing in the UK (pp. 175-209). Willian

Case Study: Lincolnshire Blue light Collaboration Programme

- The Lincolnshire Blue Light Collaboration Programme provides an innovative example of a multi agency partnership, which combines the privatisation and pluralisation of some aspects of policing, in a multi agency setting. Whilst not focused primarily on mental health, the partnership allows and fosters the idea of wider collaboration between services, which results in a more specialized and affective response to mental health calls outs. The programme includes:

- *A new ambulance, fire and police station*, which addresses the concern of logistics and locations problems. Similarly by having the services in the same building this indicates the capacity for increased collaboration and inter services decisions. This may also aid in more affective allocation of resources.

- **Various other co-location sites,** these sites are aimed at tackling rural disparity within local communities, and provide a more focused service to those who are at most need

- **Wider partners in terms of mental health collaboration,** these include the NHS, various local councils, addiction charities, various homelessness charities and the probation services. This wide range of partners, combined with a more open and collaborative emergency service partnership provides an innovative and affective example of how multi agency partnerships can ve vital in the tackling of complex and challenging societal problems, such as mental health .

NHS East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust

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