

Taking Over the Asylum: Empowerment and Mental Health

Marian Barnes, Ric Bowl



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One of the most critical developments within `welfare' in recent years, has been the transformation of service users from `passive recipients' to `active subjects' of welfare policy and practice. People who use services have challenged paternalistic notions that professionals are always the experts, and have offered alternative analyses both of the experience of living with disability or illness, and of policy and practice responses to such experiences.

Taking Over the Asylum explores the way in which users or survivors of mental health services - people too often regarded as `lacking capacity' to make decisions about their own care - have taken action to empower themselves. The authors examine evidence of the impact this action has had on their lives, on services, and on practice in mental health. They argue that disempowerment can be exacerbated by racist and gendered assumptions and they question the way we think about `mental health' and `mental illness' and what it means to live with `madness'.

Drawing on the writings of activists and on international research evidence of action by users and survivors, this important book explores different strategies being adopted to achieve change both within the mental health system and in the lives of those who live with psychological distress. The wide-ranging analysis of current debates provides a valuable and clear insight into the potential and dilemmas of collective action by service users and survivors.

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