

Book Review: ‘Law Enforcement and Public Health: Partners for Community Safety and Wellbeing: edited by Isabelle Bartkowiak-Théron, James Clover, Denise Martin, Richard F. Southby, & Nick Crofts, Cham, Springer, 2022, 280 pp., £79.99 (hardback), ISBN 9783030839123, £63.99 (eBook), ISBN 9783030839130’

The relationship between law enforcement and public health agencies is not new, nor is it surprising given their similarities in terms of purpose and the communities they serve. Whilst there are pockets of collaborative practice, it is a complex landscape that is complicated further by the many organisational and operational obstacles, with recent calls from practitioners and academics across the globe to adopt a formalised Law Enforcement and Public Health (LEPH) approach.

This book, edited by Bartkowiak-Theron, Clover, Martin, Southby and Crofts, brings together contributions from a diverse range of practitioners, advocates, educators and academics with expertise in law enforcement, public health and associated fields, from the UK to South Africa to Australia. Readers are encouraged to review the contributor summaries to appreciate the wealth and varied experiences and perspectives; some chapters also elaborate on contributor backgrounds, further highlighting the link between LEPH concepts and practice. The aim of the book is to consolidate relevant literature, and to critically analyse the effectiveness of LEPH partnerships. It offers a compelling rationale for LEPH, in promoting the building and harnessing of effective partnerships to tackle the ‘wicked issues’ evidenced across the sector, emphasising the need for action to prevent further aggravations to society.

It demonstrates many ways in which law enforcement and public health intersect, and how this is replicated worldwide; written during a global pandemic, it highlights the importance of such partnership working in an increasingly complex and internationalised society. The diverse perceptions offered from the array of contributors has resulted in a multi-faceted collection that covers many of the key issues; a range of perspectives, and examples, are given that are likely to offer some food for thought. The practical examples, extracts from service users and case studies aid in demonstrating how the conceptual discussions can be translated into practice. The international lens reveals that whilst there are contextual and cultural differences to consider, there are cross-cutting themes that exist across the LEPH landscape around the globe. It is evidenced that being a 24/7 agency means policing has become the go-to in any crisis and has instigated a dramatic shift in the role of policing, and in the expectations of the public and other agencies. Subsequent negative impacts on society (i.e. health) and relationships (i.e. lack of trust), the wellbeing of practitioners, and tensions with other agencies, reinforce the argument in support of a collaborative approach.

The book is divided into three parts, with each part concluding with a ‘community voices’ chapter (discussed later in the review). Part one provides an account of the historical and conceptual issues associated with LEPH, offering a foundation to the topics discussed throughout the collection. Middleton’s timeline of his public health experience and observations, and Clover’s overview of how policing has transformed since its inception, offer readers an insight into how traditional structures and past experiences have influenced the organisational and operational procedures, and practitioner and public perceptions and expectations (particularly of the police) that exist today. Focus then turns to vulnerability, considering how it is framed, manifested and responded to; Bartkowiak-Theron and Asquith

make an emboldened case for a multidisciplinary approach, underpinned by vulnerability as universally at the centre of LEPH. The authors offer a link between theory and practice in relation to their universal precaution model, and the fundamentals of trauma informed practice, as a means of better-preparing our law enforcement workforce to better-support and engage with societies. Leading on from this, Southby and del Pozo discuss developments in police training and education, and a growing appreciation of research and academic partnerships. Yet, when reflecting on developments in society, expectations of the police, and recent events of police malpractice, the authors question how well equipped the police are to respond to crisis situations that may in fact require the expertise of a ‘more appropriate’ service. Consideration is given to the UK landscape, although readers may wish to explore this further (in the months since this book was published, the UK Home Secretary announced a review of non-degree policing pathways and how the future of police training and education will look in the UK is under review). It would also be interesting to understand the approaches to educating public health/partner agencies on law enforcement.

The second part of this book shifts its focus to LEPH partnerships and collaborations in practice and begins with a reflection on police leadership. Taylor, Corley, McFee and Torigian compare today’s desired leadership qualities to those a decade ago; they suggest how the changing policing mission now demands leaders to demonstrate their capabilities beyond policing (i.e. community engagement) and, to be deemed to be effective in the present day, they must acknowledge the need for integrated approaches and innovation, as well as recognise the importance of both organisational learning and culture. Thomas, White, Dougall and Heyman then consider how tensions between policing and health, exacerbated by structural barriers and increasing societal demands, subsequently adversely impact the ‘missing middle’; they argue that we should focus on better-capturing relevant statistics and improving understanding of this demand and the policing role (i.e. the added strains on the health service and the subsequent impact on police time). Attention turns to sustainable LEPH partnerships, with Martin and Graham’s use of two international case studies crucially outlining the significance of partner relationships, as well as the importance of adapting an initiative’s core principles to account for local and cultural contextual differences. Considering how the police have become the ‘go-to’ agency, Martin and Graham delicately question which agencies are in fact best placed to support vulnerability in society and to lead initiatives. Del Pozo moves the discussion to collaboration between LEPH practice and academia, expanding on his earlier chapter on police training and education. Acknowledging the obstacles to implementing a LEPH approach, del Pozo argues an academic centre of LEPH could overcome such barriers by embedding an understanding of intersectional LEPH principles at the outset. Whilst there are variations in approaches and initiatives across sectors and countries, and a lack of underpinning evaluations and research, he suggests a centre would address this research gap and outlines what it could look like. Further discussion regarding if this would complement or replace existing police education models, where they exist, would be of interest.

The final part brings focus to special issues in LEPH, discussing a series of topics deemed to intersect disciplines: adopting a harm minimisation lens for drug use; understanding the needs and past trauma of refugees; recognising, preventing and addressing the impact of occupational stressors and trauma on the mental health of first responders; utilising a framework to identify and evaluate LEPH solutions to public health problems in LMICs; and

policing pandemics. The chapters here consolidate the key topics discussed earlier in the book, as well as delving further into core concepts of LEPH; for example, Egan-Vine, Bartkowiak-Theron and Julian further explore the spectrum of vulnerability, including iatrogenic, ontological and situational vulnerability.

In relation to the 'community voices' chapters, and inclusion of practitioner experiences throughout, the purpose is "to highlight the extraordinary complexities of navigating vulnerability in a professional capacity" (p. 265). For me, the editors and contributors achieve this, making it a significant strength of the book by bringing to life the more theoretical and conceptual discussions. They range from highlighting the stark reality of the adversity, vulnerability and trauma in our society, to the practical and political barriers and complex environments that practitioners face. They also offer considerations for practitioners in similar circumstances who are contemplating or embarking on adopting a LEPH approach, as well as enlightening academics as to the areas to focus future research. Whilst 'traditional' issues are considered, such as approaches to drug use, more contemporary and lesser-known topics are also presented, such as neurodiversity. The former emphasise the need to learn from past experience and the existing evidence-base whilst also reinforcing the argument for reform, with the latter stressing the necessity to further our understanding and use this to inform appropriate responses. The explanation of epilepsy and the postictal recovery phase was a particularly poignant example of how, in a policing context, misunderstanding and misinterpreting behaviours can negatively impact a vulnerable individual, and why being open to learning and adopting new practice is critical; as Bartkowiak-Theron summarises, the intention is not "to make police officers and all other first responders experts in epilepsy. The intention is to provide enough information to better inform decision-making" (p. 276).

On the whole, the collection offers readers an introduction to an international perspective of LEPH; a field that is vast, with many variations in practice and policy from the local to the international level. There may be some omissions of good practice identified by readers that will of course depend on backgrounds and experience; for me, it was a shame not to reference Oscar Kilo in relation to practitioner wellbeing, but this is expected to occur in such texts when bringing together wide-ranging and cross-cutting topics from a range of perspectives from different countries. Additionally, there were perhaps instances in which the spotlight shone more so on law enforcement and their associated challenges, and so it would be interesting for future works to consider additional aspects of public health (i.e. training and education). The editors acknowledge this collection is by no-means an exhaustive account of all-things law enforcement and public health; it does fill a gap and achieves its aim in consolidating the key concepts and issues, in a manner that is accessible to practitioners, academics and others interested in understanding the landscape. It takes steps to open discussions around what the future of LEPH partnerships should and could look like, and how this can be achieved.

Across each of the chapters, three main takeaways are evident. Firstly, there are many challenges that are apparent across the system, with variations of the same issues demonstrated in different contexts and countries. Tackling such obstacles is hindered by an increasingly complex society and the introduction of new and changing demand. Many contributors argue for bold reform, emphasising the need to be more dynamic, flexible and informed to enable policymakers and practitioners to respond to such change. This leads to the second point, regarding the importance of research and evaluation. Particularly evidenced

in various case studies and accounts of personal experiences, the impact of a limited understanding and a failure to appropriately plan, implement and evaluate policing and public health responses can have unintended consequences and cause adverse outcomes in the community it is intended to protect. It is emphasised that whilst we must engage in knowledge sharing and use of the evidence base, it is also critical to consider cultural and contextual differences (and time, i.e. the response to a previous pandemic may not have been as effective during the covid pandemic). Finally, if a LEPH approach is to be successfully adopted, long-term investment and whole-system engagement is needed to bring all services, policy and practice into alignment. Despite a consensus amongst front-line practitioners and consistent calls for partnership working, hesitancy is reflected in policy and legislation resulting in the continuation of siloed practices. Whilst collaborative solutions may appear costly and resource-heavy in the immediate future, it is argued that the longer-term rewards are evident and worthwhile, and reinforced by the increase in policing demand to safeguard vulnerable people and respond to traditionally non-policing matters.