Working for Health

Health and policy

Presenter
Two community workers who link their views on health to policy in practice. First Jane Jones, from the Pilton Project in Edinburgh.

Jane Jones
We don't take a very strict medical model of health and we don't just work with illness or disease though that's the obvious thing I suppose. It means that we would take on board issues like housing, issues like what the local shops are like, if people are finding that they can't get an adequate diet because the local shops don't stock very good food or it's poor quality or it's very expensive, then obviously that limits the choices they've got in terms of keeping themselves healthy. Play space for children we've looked at, as well as mental health and maybe support groups for people with an illness, that doesn't mean we ignore that but we would have a very broad view of what health is.

Presenter
Gill Meerer, a community doctor who works in Northampton.

Gill Meerer
I suppose I've always been very concerned with the issue of powerlessness you know in all its forms as it were so, particularly in the health field how people have no say - very simply - in what goes on and that's been quite driving interest of mine of how to get that profile raised higher in the health services field.
And then the way that the kind of medical dominance of the health field has meant that people's own view of what's wrong with them or view of what their own health is has been squashed into the sidelines quite a lot and I'm also quite interested in trying to get hold of that again and try and give it a higher profile.

Health is wider than just treating disease the role of the NHS is not only to treat disease but also promote health, and a lot of studies have shown that it's quite fundamental things that affect people's health. Fundamental things like whether they can get to where they want to be, whether they feel happy and secure, and whether they've got enough money, there's obviously not much that the NHS can do in some of those areas but we feel that the Right-Angle Project is trying to address other areas that can be met through collaboration with local agencies and people.

We want to put some effort into helping the community to develop to a state where they can get things organised for themselves. The idea is the money that we're spending is not that it goes into a bottomless pit, but that at the end of the project there'll still be some of the things running and set up that we've begun through the project, and that's a very efficient use of money because then if things have a momentum of their own they'll be taken on and funded in other ways.