

THE STUDENT'S COMPANION TO

SOCIAL POLICY

EDITED BY

Pete Alcock, Tina Haux,
Vikki McCall and Margaret May



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The Student's Companion to Social Policy

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Introduction

This *Student's Companion to Social Policy* is a resource book that will be of practical use to students of social policy throughout their undergraduate or postgraduate study of the subject. It aims to acquaint them with the study of social policy by covering all the main themes and issues likely to be included in any curriculum in the UK, and indeed in many other countries. Readers are introduced to current theoretical and ideological debates, historical developments, service areas, key policy issues and the broader UK and international context in which social policy operates. Each chapter includes a short guide to further sources, which points to some of the literature that pursues the issues addressed in the chapter in more depth and also alerts readers to major web-based sources. The *Companion* will be of value to students studying social policy on its own, as part of another undergraduate or postgraduate programme (for instance, sociology, politics, applied social science or management studies) or as part of a professional course in a related field (for instance, social care work, nursing and health studies, public and civil society sector management or criminology).

For this sixth edition of the *Companion* existing authors have updated their contributions and, in some cases, previous authors have been replaced with others leading in research and teaching in those areas. As in the last edition we have asked contributors to provide readers with a short bullet point summary of key points at the beginning of each chapter and to conclude with some brief speculations on emerging issues. There has also been a change in the editorial team for this edition. Sharon Wright has taken on other responsibilities since the publication of the fifth

edition and has been replaced as fourth editor by Vikki McCall. The current editors and the publisher would like to thank Sharon for all her work on previous editions. We are pleased that Vikki has been able to join us, and her role has meant that the editorial process has remained much the same for this latest edition.

All the contributors to this book are researchers and teachers in the forefront of social policy studies in the UK and beyond. Contributors were selected on the basis that their expertise in their particular areas would provide readers with an authoritative introduction to a range of thinking and scholarship. Because the book has been prepared as a handbook and guide, rather than as a single text that focuses on one or two main themes, not all readers will necessarily want to read it from cover to cover. Indeed, most readers are likely to use it as a source of reference for consultation throughout their studies; hence the chapters have been written so that they can be read in any order, separately or in groups.

- Part I introduces students to the concepts and approaches that underpin the study of social policy. These include a brief history of the scope and development of the subject and the ways in which it is studied and researched, together with discussion of the key concepts that students are likely to encounter in their studies.
- Part II provides readers with a guide to the theoretical and ideological context of social policy. Readers are introduced to the central themes and perspectives that provide the intellectual foundations of debates about the focus and aims of the subject.
- Part III surveys key themes and issues in the historical development of social policy in the UK including

considerations of nineteenth-century welfare arrangements, the growth of state welfare in the first half of the twentieth century, the policies of Conservative and Labour administrations in the second half of the century and those of recent governments.

- Part IV examines the impact of the devolution of political powers to the separate administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Part V explores the social, political and economic context in which policies are developed and implemented, and some of the crucial challenges facing policymakers.
- Part VI focuses on the organisation and production of social policy. The different providers of welfare are examined by looking at the five main sectors of welfare – state, commercial, occupational, civil society and informal – setting these in the context of a brief examination of the ways in which welfare is financed and how taxation policy operates.
- Part VII considers different dimensions of the governance of welfare, including the role of regional and local government.
- Part VIII comprises chapters that examine the key domains of welfare provision, with each providing up-to-date summaries of policy developments, planning and current debates.
- Part IX focuses on the provision of services to particular social groups and the extent to which these groups are advantaged or disadvantaged by different aspects of policy development.
- Part X explores the international context of social policy. There are introductory chapters on comparative and international analysis, policy learning and transfer