

Welcome to the third edition of volume 28 of your journal, and the first since the last Annual General Meeting of the Social Services Research Group. At that meeting, the implications of the current unprecedented cuts in public services due to the banking crisis were discussed. It became clear that SSRG would not be immune as local authorities try to save money. One important decision made at the AGM was to permit SSRG to produce the journal in an 'electronic only' format if necessary in future, and to reduce the number of editions from three per year to two. There are compelling reasons for this. The costs of postage have increased dramatically even though the costs of printing the journal have decreased. We may therefore be sending you future editions of the Journal in electronic format.

On a less sombre note, this edition of the journal includes five interesting papers and some lively book reviews. The papers variously reflect important themes of social exclusion and inequality, challenges in delivering cohesive local multi-agency services and the extent of research mindedness in social work culture in the UK.

Greenfields and Smith's paper focuses on the social exclusion of housed Gypsies and Travellers – people whose culture and identity is intimately connected to travelling but who are housed in 'bricks and mortar' accommodation. Their paper provides a powerful analysis of the consequences of what could be described as forced assimilation, which includes pervasive racism, both personal and institutional, as leading to multiple deprivation, and often to social dislocation, distress, depression and anxiety. As well as a cogent analysis, the authors present a series of practical recommendations and actions.

Grant's paper looks at the compulsory Work Focused Interviews for Incapacity Benefit claimants and the fear and distress caused to claimants. Her paper uses case studies to explore different impacts of these compulsory interviews on IB claimants.

Stock and Lambert consider the views of carers who have received a carers' assessment since the Carers Act of 2004. Their findings describe the difficulties and delays experienced by some carers in finding out about their entitlement to an assessment, and goes on to describe both benefits from being recognised as a carer but also problems encountered by carers in trying to work in partnership with professionals. A key finding of their paper is that carers often find their needs are not adequately met, and the authors call for a more holistic and personalised approach from agencies whose job is to support them.

Lots has been written over the last decade about the importance of research in improving the quality of social work practice and of the need for social workers and their managers to have some degree of 'research literacy'. **Webber and Salter's** paper reports on findings from an evaluation of a pilot online research training course for social workers. The authors' study is focused on the effectiveness of online versus classroom based approaches to the delivery of a short course intended to improve the ability of social worker participants to write a research proposal. Although based on small numbers, the authors report that e-learning may have potential in enhancing research capacity amongst social workers.

It's sometimes said that in public sector services, re-organisation is often a solution looking for a problem. In the final paper, **Ray Jones** offers a thoughtful and thought-provoking paper which reviews the impacts of successive attempts by governments over the last couple of decades to integrate health and social care. The paper makes the important point that continual re-organisations are disruptive and, far from bringing about more effective working relationships between health and social services, can frustrate attempts by these agencies to work more closely together at a local level.

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