

This edition brings to our readership a selection of papers based upon presentations made at the SSRG conference in Manchester earlier this year. As in previous years, the conference edition is only able to offer a fraction of the material that comprised another successful annual event bringing together an impressive range of research, practice and policy innovation in UK social care. In this edition we start with the paper by Rhidian Hughes and Alan Rosenbach from the Care Quality Commission who address the fast moving changes and complexities that now confront those who use, deliver and regulate health and social care. The paper outlines an increasingly pressured service context in which achieving desired outcomes will place ever more emphasis upon effective joint commissioning. Their paper clearly demonstrates the need for good evaluative studies of service activity and quality in order to plan strategically and this links nicely to the paper by Rachel Taylor, Liz Cairncross and Sara Livadeas who describe their research into home care admissions in Oxfordshire. This careful and encouraging study into care pathways and prevention demonstrates the need for rigorous local planning.

The Oxfordshire study takes the reader naturally to Hannah Roscoe's careful discussion of evaluation methodologies that can measure the impact of joined up adult mental health and children's services. This paper draws upon guidance from SCIE around what constitutes good enough evidence to inform policy. The paper offers a refreshing critique of the orthodoxies surrounding what counts as 'gold standard' evidence and we are urged to consider the more nuanced approach of a 'realist evaluation' that can map and learn from complex interventions rather than simply pronounce narrowly on success or failure.

At the core of good social care lies assessment. This deceptively easy and familiar claim is forensically examined by Emma Miller from the Glasgow School of Social Work whose review of new developments in assessment practice brings the reader up to date with current challenges. The multiple (and not always complementary) functions of assessment are considered in relation to a shift from service-led to a person-centred outcomes focused assessment.

Our final paper takes the reader in a different direction and towards the momentous landmark that will be the birth of the College of Social Work. The paper by Dorit Braun (SCIE) and Bridget Robb (BASW) charts the recent debates and current thinking that will help inform the establishment of the College in 2011. Their insights make for fascinating and timely reading into the proposed functions and purposes of this wholly unique development in the history of UK social work. While the College will initially be England facing, ongoing discussions in the other countries of the UK will likely broaden its membership and remit. In that sense the paper, as the authors advise, is not yet the final word on this unfolding and momentous event for the profession.

As in all issues there are reviews of new books and we are indebted to Josie Collier (social worker, Peterborough), Catherine Rees (social worker, Addenbrookes Hospital) and Gillian MacIntyre (lecturer, Strathclyde University) for their detailed and constructive treatments of three new texts, respectively - *Learning from Child Deaths and Serious Abuse* (Vincent, S.); *The Primal Wound: Understanding the Adopted Child* (Newton Verrier, N.); *Social Work Skills with Adults* (Mantell, A.).

Finally, it is with sincere thanks and much appreciation that we say farewell to some of the editorial team who have been at the centre of the journal's activities and development in recent years. Greg Mantle, from Anglia Ruskin University, who has edited RPP with Andy Pithouse since 2006, has decided to step down as joint editor and we shall miss his considerable energy and breadth of academic interest and expertise. Sue Harrington, also from Anglia Ruskin, will also withdraw as production editor. Sue has played a central role in co-ordinating and administering the journal - laying out the papers in the journal's house style, proof reading – liaising with reviewers, authors, editors and printers, making sure that the journal is published on schedule. The Editorial Board would like to thank both of them for their time, enthusiasm and commitment. Peter Scourfield (also from Anglia Ruskin) who has overseen a very successful revival of the book review section of the journal will remain as Book Review Editor but will step down when a successor can be found.

We have been fortunate indeed to find a new editorial home for the journal that should prove every bit as successful as the Anglia Ruskin arrangement. The new host for RPP is University of Derby and the new editorial board comprises Guy Daly, (currently at Coventry University but from January 2011 at the University of Derby), prior to Coventry he was Head of the School of Health and Social Sciences at the University of Gloucestershire. Guy is joined by John Woolham, of Coventry University. Prior to becoming a Research Fellow at Coventry University last year, John worked for Northamptonshire County Council for almost two decades as a Senior Research Officer. Andy Pithouse, Director of Research at the School of Social Sciences Cardiff University continues as joint editor. We enter a new and turbulent period in UK social care and it is ever more important we have a vibrant and independent voice that can speak for the many constituencies that together seek to care for some of our most vulnerable citizens. We need your support to do that – send your papers, discussion pieces and comments to the editorial board – we can't promise to publish everything we receive but we will do our best to publish that which speaks persuasively to a progressive citizen-focused inclusive social care.

Andy Pithouse