

## **Editorial**

Welcome to Volume 32(3) of *Research, Policy and Planning*. This edition is the first since SSRG has merged with the *Local Area Research and Intelligence Association (LARIA)*. Both organisations believe that the merger is in their best interest, and the Editorial Team and Board look forward to working within this new organisational arrangement. SSRG will retain its identity as a Special Interest Group within LARIA and RPP will continue as usual. We look forward to welcoming members of LARIA on our Editorial Board and to receiving contributions for RPP from LARIA members. We think our journal can play a particularly useful role within these new arrangements since LARIA does not have its own peer review journal, and RPP encourages papers on topics and issues that extend beyond social care whilst having relevance to it.

The current edition contains four papers on diverse issues which may variously be of interest to people working with children and their families, mental health professionals, social work teachers and adult social care commissioners and senior managers.

In the first, **Martyn Harling *et al.*** consider the impact of a module delivered to a cohort of students designed to promote the inclusion of substance misuse into social work curricula. The evaluation was intended to assess if the module impacted on values and attitudes of social work students to substance misuse and working with substance misusers. Though the study did not suggest significant changes in attitude or values, the findings did suggest that the module gave students more confidence to work effectively with substance misusers.

The second paper by **Colin Slasberg** builds on a body of published work (both in this journal and elsewhere) over the past several years. Previous work has been highly critical of the Resource Allocation Systems or (RAS) developed in most Adult Social Care Departments to justify the budget amounts allocated to Direct Payment and Managed Budget users. The present paper provides a detailed description of the development of an alternative approach to assessment and support planning. This 'blueprint' emerged from consultative work carried out by the author with an Adult Social Care Department that had expressed interest in developing an alternative approach. Legal and political sensitivities meant that in the final analysis the model developed was shelved, but the paper provides a serious attempt to conceptualise an alternative to methods of resource allocation.

Our third paper, from **Joan Rapaport and Geraldine Poirier Baiani**, uses both theoretical insight and empirical data to apply role theory to family values. The authors describe, and demonstrate, the application of reciprocal role valorisation (RRV) to Family Group Conferences (FGC) in New Brunswick, Canada. Carefully describing the emergence of RRV and its importance to the concept of 'nearest relative' under the 1983 Mental Health Act, the authors use the concept to re-analyse empirical data collected in New Brunswick to demonstrate its importance to the successful use of FGCs.

The final paper in this edition is written by **Joanna Fox** and is based on participatory research focused on the role unpaid carers play in the recovery of people with mental ill-health. This qualitative study was based upon data collected via a training programme offered to a carer group of 11 participants and provides useful insights into carer perspectives about the relationship they would like to have with mental health professionals and how recovery oriented practice might impact on them and the service user they cared for. The paper draws on insights from this study and European research to develop a conceptual model of service design described as a 'triangle of care'.

Last but not least, the edition would not be complete without contributions from reviewers, ably supported by our Reviews Editor, Paul Dolan. The lead in our book reviews for this edition is taken by a review of a significant book by a significant campaigning figure, Peter Beresford, who is no stranger to RPP as a contributor, most recently on personalisation. His book is both wide-ranging and autobiographical, and he puts forward a critique of what he conceives of as conventional social policy, and advocates some principles to help ensure social policy 'is shaped and owned by the people for whom it is intended'. Our reviewer points to some dangers of the approach advocated: populism and rejecting expert knowledge are not guaranteed to achieve policy results which respect some of the user groups Beresford would want to support. Nevertheless this is a debate which needs to continue as informed by these ideas.

We hope you find the papers included in this edition interesting and useful, but the Editorial Board are always keen to have feedback from our readers. We continue to welcome contributions on broadly defined social care topics, and from early career researchers, students and local authority staff as well as university academics.

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