Research Update

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Social Inclusion Partnerships

The Scottish Executive Social Justice Agenda, which aims to tackle poverty and disadvantage, includes a comprehensive social inclusion programme (http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialjustice). The Scottish Social Inclusion Network (SSIN) helps the Executive develop its strategy for social inclusion and supports different sectors in the co-ordination of their respective inclusion strategies (http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialjustice/ssin/index.htm). One element of Scotland's Social Justice Agenda is the Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP) initiative. SIPs are funded by the Scottish Executive, while responsibility for the programme currently rests with the regeneration arm of Communities Scotland (http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk). SIPs are multi-agency partnership bodies, which bring together the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to promote social inclusion and develop innovative ways of working. SIPs can be organised thematically, focusing on a specific client group in a specific area, or geographically with an urban regeneration focus. SIPs are not only involved in developing services, but also commission and conduct research to inform the development of services. This issue of Research Update will focus on two SIPs and the research they are currently involved in.

Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Partnership (EYSIP)

Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Partnership (EYSIP) (http://www.youthinclusion.org) is a thematic partnership, which aims to develop new ways of tackling barriers to social inclusion faced by young people in Edinburgh. Young people recognised by EYSIP as priority groups include: looked after children, care leavers, ethnic minorities, disabled young people, young carers, those affected by homelessness, those at risk of offending or addiction, and young people experiencing ill health. EYSIP funds an action research programme for organisations wishing to carry out social inclusion research. Projects examine the causes and effects of social exclusion in young people, and also highlight gaps in current service provision. Topics include health, education, crime, access to social, cultural and leisure opportunities, and training and employment. Involvement of young people in the research process, and in the planning and evaluation of services, is seen as a priority. The action research programme developed and funded by EYSIP also places an emphasis on 'learning for all' involved in the research process, whether they are young people, practitioners or policy makers. Examples of recently completed projects in the area of health include 'Action Research into the Mental Health/Emotional Support Needs of Young, Black, and Ethnic Minority Women'. The project was carried out by Saheliya, a mental health organisation for Black and minority ethnic women, and assessed the mental health needs of young black and minority ethnic women through a programme of group work. Another project 'Health Yerself', completed in 2002 by Phab Scotland (http://www.phab.org.uk), sought to identify the barriers faced by disabled young people when accessing health services. The project aimed to develop a model to help young people communicate their health needs effectively, and also develop a health charter. The research draws on information from workshops held with young people with disabilities in Edinburgh. Further details of these, and other action research projects are available on the EYSIP website. The grants programme for 2002/2003 can also be found on the site.

Recognising that it is important to support practice and service organisations in adopting the findings of research, EYSIP also fund 'Implementation Projects'. The Implementation Projects are central to the aims of the EYSIP in working to change practice to improve services and better meet the needs of young people. Some of the Implementation Projects result from the findings of EYSIP action research projects, others focus more widely on EYSIP's priority areas or target groups. Details of completed and ongoing Implementation Projects are provided on the EYSIP website (http://www.youthinclusion.org/project/implementation.htm). These include a project being run by the Edinburgh and East of Scotland Deaf Society (http://www.deafsociety.org) which aims to break down the barriers facing young deaf people in accessing cultural, social and leisure services and to develop models of good practice. The project is based on the findings of the EYSIP Action Research Project 'Access All Areas'. Further

details can be obtained from: Jackie Erskine at the Edinburgh and East of Scotland Deaf Society, email: jerskine@escotdeafsoc.demon.co.uk. Another Implementation project, 'After "Looked After" – building better integrated support for young people leaving care', aims to find out what kind of ongoing support young people would like to receive, and develop current practice by enabling agencies to improve joint working through training in person-centred approaches to service provision. The project is being jointly run by Scottish Human Services Trust (http://www.shstrust.org.uk) and the Social Work Department within the City of Edinburgh Council. For further details of the project contact Vicki Butler at the Scottish Human Services Trust, email: vbutler@shstrust.org.uk.

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To facilitate the dissemination of their work, EYSIP also produce a series of briefing papers called 'Learning by Doing'. They provide concise summaries of key findings of completed research, and include lessons learned during the research process. The EYSIP website also contains information on completed and ongoing projects, and details of the grants programme for 2003/2004. The 2003/2004 programme includes special grants for projects focusing on the inclusion of young people from black and ethnic minorities in Scotland. See the EYSIP website for further details (http://www.youthinclusion.org).

The Big Step

The Big Step (http://www.thebigstep.org.uk) is one of 11 social inclusion partnerships operating under the Glasgow Alliance (http://www.glasgow-alliance.co.uk), the umbrella organisation for the Social Inclusion Partnerships operating in Glasgow. The Big Step is a thematic SIP supporting care leavers aged between 15 and 21 in the move from care to independence. Its work covers education, health and well-being and independent living. The Big Step develops and maintains a range of services in the local area, and undertake primary and secondary research. The principles of partnership, participation, empowerment, inclusiveness, equity and sustainability are central to the way in which the Big Step works. It is also committed to involving young people in every aspect of their work, including in their research programme. A recently

completed Health Research project, carried out in partnership with Scottish Health Feedback, surveyed the health behaviours, knowledge and needs of young people in care and those leaving care. The Big Step was able to involve young people from a range of residential settings to contribute to the project, through both surveys and focus groups. Ongoing research into the support experiences of young people in care who self-harm also includes a steering group of young people to help direct the project. Further details on these projects can be found on the Big Step website.

The Big Step is also active in promoting good practice in research. It has recently developed and agreed a data protection protocol to enable the project to share data on young people who have left care in Glasgow, whilst ensuring that the Data Protection Act 1998 is adhered to and confidentiality is protected. The agreement is initially between Glasgow City Council and the Big Step, but has the potential to be extended between Big Step and other partner agencies. Access to this data will help the Big Step and partner agencies to build up a more accurate picture of the lives and experiences of young care leaves in Glasgow and to better inform research priorities and service development.

As with other SIPs, Big Step uses a collaborative approach which includes links with area based SIPs. Currently Big Step is collaborating in projects with Easterhouse and Drumchapel SIPs, making better use of resources and expertise. Further details of Big Step projects can be found on the Big Step website or by contacting a member of the Big Step team.

Sources of Social Inclusion Research

For further details of all 48 SIPs, including contact details and website links, go to the Communities Scotland website (http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk). The Communities Scotland site also contains details of their own research in the areas of regeneration and social exclusion. Details of the Partnership Representatives' Network (RPN), the national network for community and voluntary sector representatives involved in SIPs are available on the website of the Scottish Council for Voluntary

Organisations (SCVO) (http://www.scvo.org.uk/sip/default.htm). Details of additional social inclusion research projects can be found in the Scottish Executive's Social Inclusion Research Bulletin, which provides details of recently completed and ongoing research projects funded by the Scottish Executive (http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialjustice/research/index.htm). A more detailed listing of the Central Research Unit's Social Justice Research Publications can be found at (http://www.scotland.gov.uk/cru/res-find.asp).

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