

## **Editorial**

Welcome to this Autumn 2008 edition of *Research, Policy and Planning*. We open with a detailed paper by Chih Hoong Sin and colleagues that brings close critical scrutiny to the impact of regulatory fitness requirements regarding disabled people studying, qualifying, registering and working in social work. Their investigation, undertaken while based at the Disability Rights Commission, constitutes a comprehensive review of legislation, regulation and statutory guidance governing the social work profession and gives much food for thought about a number of perceived shortcomings in policy and practice.

The disability theme continues with the second article, from Chengqiu Xie and associates, concerning the results of a national study looking at the management of care for people with physical and sensory disabilities in England. Variations were found in aspects of care management arrangements and it is suggested that, in some respects, services are less advanced for this user group than for people with learning disabilities. A number of key insights arise from the study that can help inform decision-making in this field and which can guide future evaluatory studies that the authors argue are much needed.

Matt Baumann and colleagues explore closely the views of key professionals regarding the implementation of the reimbursement scheme - part of the Community Care (Delayed Discharges) Act 2003. The research was undertaken at sites where performance in terms of rates of delayed discharge was already effective and the article offers valuable guidance around good practice derived from their study into the early working of the reimbursement scheme. The team's work will be of much interest to those involved in implementing the scheme and to those with a role in discharge arrangements.

Next, Kay Caldwell and associates offer valuable illumination of the benefits of action research as a key strategy for promoting the involvement of older people as service consumers in health research. Their paper examines the practical and ethical complexities of user and researcher joint involvement in researching the service experience. Their discovery and discussion of shared and divergent perspectives of consumers and researchers makes for compelling reading and will be highly relevant to those engaged in, or planning to use, action research to evaluate practice and policy.

Finally, and highly pertinent to our 'credit crunch' times, Mark Drakeford and Lee Gregory review the role of credit unions and their diversification in Wales in response to new 'market' demands. Their study casts light on the much neglected world of the economically marginalised. Their original research into new credit union products and the risks and benefits in financially helping families reveals a rarely glimpsed credit-support system at work. It is one that is being called increasingly to assist ever more adults and children at the margins of economic wellbeing caught in a spiral of deepening money problems.

Last but not least, we are very pleased to include reviews of five new and very different books that address a range of topical issues in social care. One text, 'Understanding Social Work Research', should be of wide interest to students, academics and practitioners alike. If there are any books that you would like to see reviewed in future editions of the Journal please let us know and we will do our best to include these.

As the new editorial team, this is our fourth edition and we continue with our efforts to provide a varied selection of articles and reviews about the pressing issues of contemporary social care across the UK. We very much intend that these will be of relevance to the broad spectrum of SSRG members and our many other readers here and abroad with interests in policy, practice and research. As ever, we welcome your comments, critical as well as positive, as to how we are doing so that we can more fully meet your expectations. And, as always, if you would like to submit an article yourself or review a book, we would be pleased to hear from you. Contact details and submission guidelines can be found at <http://www.ssrge.org.uk/publications/rpp/index.asp>.

With best wishes from the editorial team: Sue Harrington, Greg Mantle, Andy Pithouse and Peter Scourfield