

This is the second edition of Volume 27 of *Research, Policy and Planning*, comprising six articles, each based on a paper presented at SSRG's 2009 Annual Workshop, and five book reviews. We open with a paper by Peter Beresford that brings critical attention to Government plans for social care and explores two key questions: first, whether social care will be equipped to provide a needs- and rights-based service; and, second, whether moves towards 'personalisation' are likely to close the gap between the aims and claims of policymakers and the realities of life for people needing help and support. The author concludes that, in the absence of increased funding and with the very real risk that funding may be reduced, fears that personalisation actually means 'cuts by stealth' are unlikely to be assuaged.

The social care theme continues with the second article, from Juliette Malley and Ann Netten, who present interim findings from the Outcomes of Social Care for Adults (OSCA) project which is developing a measure of social care outcome. The project is taking forward previous work, including the Adult Social Care Outcome Toolkit (ASCOT), which collects data concerning a person's quality of life related to social care. Through cognitive testing with service users, the authors confirm the relevance and scope of the domains of occupation, social participation and involvement, safety, and dignity within the outcome measure. The article also provides a fascinating insight into the detail of how measures such as ASCOT are tested, refined and extended for use across a wider range of service user groups and settings.

Darren Sharpe invites us to consider further the value of involving children and young people in research, drawing on the experiences of the National Youth Agency's 'Young Researcher Network'. The Network has developed both a toolkit and guide for involving young people in research which should prove of considerable interest. The author elucidates the characteristic levels of involvement and explores some of the drivers for, and difficulties of, children and young people 'doing research'. Very usefully, attention is also given to the various ways of accrediting the work undertaken by young researchers. Finally, the role of the (adult) support worker or practitioner is carefully considered and a range of ways of providing assistance to young researchers outlined.

Next, come two contributions that seek to respond to 'crisis'. Andrew Cozens describes how the economic recession, alongside the widespread public concern about children's safety and about the funding of long-term care, has brought an intense critical scrutiny to the effectiveness and value-for-money of current service provision. A key role is posited for local government in the promotion of social and community integration. Davy Jones ably knits together the economic, climatic, demographic and 'public-confidence-in-politicians' challenges presently facing us and argues that a radical overhaul of public services is necessary. Again, the leadership role of local government is given central importance in helping to shape the inevitable 'new ways of living'.

Keith Moultrie and Celia Atherton provide a meticulous account of evidence-informed commissioning in children's services. Their view is that the emergence of commissioning as a key role for Children's Trusts provides an opportunity for children's services to develop more on the basis of evidence than predilection in favour of a particular approach. However, they sound a note of caution with their reminder that commissioning itself must be securely founded on strong values and informed by robust evidence.

The issue is completed by five book reviews, written by practitioners and academics, and spanning a broad range of topics of interest to the readership – dementia, the legislative

framework relating to adult protection, the Integrated Children's System pilot, education for children in public care, and safeguarding children and young people. If you would like to review a book for a future issue of the Journal, please contact Peter Scourfield, Book Reviews Editor.

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