

Editorial

Welcome to the sixth edition of the journal, which continues our aim of publishing good quality practice based research. This issue contains articles that range widely across mental health and learning disability settings. The first article, by Elizabeth Bartlett and colleagues in Leeds, looks at the longer-term impact of closing large mental hospitals and moving care into the community. They look at the geographical distribution of people with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder and find, against expectation, that these treatment changes have not led to a greater concentration of people with these problems in inner city areas. The second article, by Jon Willows and colleagues from Sussex, also looks at the impact of legislation changes, with the focus here on developing a referral management system in a clinical psychology and counselling service. They report on a system that has allowed reduction of waiting times, an important government priority. Our third article, by John Wattis and Stephen Curran of Huddersfield and Wakefield, picks up an important theme that is often ignored in mental health services, that of spirituality. The focus is on older people and the article is written from a Christian perspective, but the issues are so important that they cut across all age groups and religious and cultural perspectives, so we are inviting comments from others with a different focus. The fourth article, by Derek Skea from Huddersfield, compares two day centres for adults with learning disabilities in terms of quality of interactions between staff and service users. Such detailed observational studies are difficult to set up but help provide research

evidence that can lead to improvement of services. Our final article, from Stephen Curran and colleagues in Wakefield, looks at the use of hypnotic medication in an older adult setting, finding that hypnotics are commonly prescribed, particularly to patients with depression.

It is good to see so much practice based research going and informing local service delivery in a very direct way. The national NHS Research & Development agenda, mentioned in our last Editorial, is becoming increasingly centralised, with more emphasis on large programmes of research based in centres of excellence. Our view is that this will make small scale practice based research more difficult to achieve, although there will continue to be opportunities to attract R&D funding within the ambit of the large programmes.