



South West Yorkshire **NHS**
Mental Health NHS Trust



With all of us in mind

Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Research and Practice

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Editorial

Welcome to the fourth edition of the journal and our second year of publication. Feedback from our readers continues to be positive and it is particularly gratifying that we have such a broad readership including service users and carers. A recent letter to the Editorial Board from a self help group, about an article in an earlier edition, echoes some of the comments received:

'I would like to say, on behalf of our Self Help group, how interesting and informative the Research and Practice publication is. There are many points raised which are very valid relating to food intake of people who suffer from depression, however it could be difficult to change many peoples habits because of lack of motivation and basically just eating to survive'.

The Department of Health recently published its new strategy for Research and Development 'Best Research for Best Health'. This presents new challenges and opportunities for researchers and research managers both within and outside the NHS. There is much in the strategy that will be welcomed by mental health and learning disability researchers. For example, the move away from the existing model of allocating R & D funding, the commitment to working in partnership with stakeholders including service users and carers, the focus on getting research into practice and the generation of practice based evidence. However, there are also challenges to meet in responding to the new strategy, particularly in negotiating the new funding mechanisms, whilst retaining and strengthening the strong programmes of research we currently deliver. In mental health and learning disabilities research, it has been difficult to access some of the principle funding streams or forge relationships with industry, outside the Mental Health Research Network and main academic centres. It is clear that to do so in the future organisations and researchers will have to become more strategic, collaborative and innovative.

Central to the new strategy is a commitment to making the NHS a centre for research excellence with research focused on the needs of patients and the public and the improvement of health and social care. It also aims to tackle the inequalities of funding and access to studies that have impacted

on the development of a research led NHS in the past. In order to achieve this vision, the Department intend to set up a National Institute for Health Research in England. This will be the framework through which researchers, research and research programmes are managed.

NHS researchers have traditionally lacked a clear career pathway and access to advice and training that supports skills development. The strategy suggests that the National Institute for Health Research Faculty will in future provide support and capacity development, as well as an advice service, to address these issues. There will also be new funding streams in addition to the expansion of existing streams to promote the development of high quality research and researchers. Coupled with a reduction in bureaucracy through simplified administrative arrangements and a single IT system, the research process should be easier to navigate for researchers and research managers alike. This would undoubtedly be a welcome development and could do much to encourage clinicians to undertake research.

This edition of the journal once again includes a wide variety of articles written by researchers and practitioners from a range of disciplines. As in the last edition, we would like to take the opportunity to encourage those engaged in both mental health and learning disability research to submit contributions.

The Editorial Board.