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EDITORIAL

Peter McGill, Tizard Centre

My life as Editor of this journal is endlessly fascinating! Much academic work in learning disability (or in any field, for that matter) is inevitably, highly specialised, it being impossible to stay properly abreast of research across all aspects of learning disability. So, one of the nice things about editing the journal is coming face-to-face with material covering a broad range of topics and perspectives, many of which I would not normally come across. So, in the current Issue, we have articles focused on children, on adults and on older adults; on education, health and social care; on the UK and Australia; on innovations in direct work with people with learning disabilities and on the perspectives of paid carers, family carers and senior social care managers. The variety is huge and, ultimately, central to the journal's reason for being. I, as an academic, may have the "luxury" of being able to know more and more about less and less...but direct support workers, professionals, provider agencies, commissioners and policy makers need to arrange supports, services, funding etc. across the whole of people's lives, across education, health and social care in ways that produce good outcomes for people with learning disabilities and their families. A general knowledge and understanding of key issues is, therefore, essential and TLDR is one of the ways in which such knowledge and understanding can be encouraged.

Adam Ockelford's article might seem at first glance to be incredibly specialised. But think for a moment of the pleasure that music and music making give to so many of us and the importance of finding ways to share such experiences with people with learning disabilities is clear. Fern Faux's commentary also illustrates how, and this is a common experience, approaches developed in apparently highly specialised circumstances can turn out to have much more general relevance. In this case, she draws attention to how video technology can be used to assess development arising from teaching, not just in musical abilities but across the board. It is not hard to imagine how similar technology could have applications with adults in areas of health and social care.

Resource allocation processes are often complicated and bureaucratic. To some extent this is a necessary feature of ensuring efficiency and fairness. At the same time it can hide the underlying value judgements that are being made. The article by Sue Davies and her colleagues points this up nicely, showing how the views of people with learning disabilities differ from those of Directors of Social Services and from what can be determined about the values driving actual resource allocation for social care. Simon Duffy's commentary shows how rapidly change has occurred in resource allocation systems he and his colleagues were instrumental in developing not much more than 10 years ago. There is a fundamental question here. If personalisation, self-directed support, personal budgets, direct payments and all the other such devices are to mean anything, should not the support an individual receives be driven, as far as possible, by the person's expressed desires and preferences? Clearly, there will be exceptions. Some individuals will be too disabled to come to such views themselves, others may express preferences that it would be unlawful or socially very difficult to meet, in other cases we may decide that there are some preferences we can afford and some we cannot. But if the fundamental driver is not the values of the individual needing support, then surely there is a problem.

Stuart Wark and his colleagues identify the difficulties perceived by direct support workers providing services for older people with learning disabilities in rural Australia. While some of the issues identified may be specific to Australia or to rural environments, most, as Martin Stevens notes in his commentary, are of general relevance. It is a truism, of course, to comment on the increasing numbers of older people, both with and without learning disability. Truisms are, however, true by definition and we remain poorly prepared for the expansion in support that will be required. One of the issues raised by Martin Stevens is that of specialism. We are likely to need practitioners who understand both learning disability and the needs of older people if older people with learning disabilities are not going to be poorly treated or misunderstood.

Kuljit Heer and her colleagues investigate the experiences of British South Asian family carers. There is a considerable literature on the experiences of family carers more generally. But much of this literature is focussed on White, middle class families. So the growing study of family carers who don't fit this mould is very interesting and

important for service providers and planners. It is fascinating to see the extent to which carers in this study shared many experiences with those of very different groups. To some extent, the caring task is indivisible. At the same time, it is clear that culture, and clash of cultures, are very important in fully understanding families' experiences.

Finally, I want to note the recent appointment of Jill Bradshaw as Associate Editor of TLDR. Jill trained as a speech and language therapist, working in a community team with adults with intellectual disabilities and in a challenging needs service. She first came to the Tizard Centre in 1995, in order to develop her research career, and returned in 2012 after a career break. Jill's research interests are around staff culture, communication and challenging behaviour, and person-centred approaches. She is particularly interested in using qualitative approaches to enable people to share their views and experiences. Jill and I will always very happy to consider suggestions for articles in the journal. You can contact us at tizard-tldr@kent.ac.uk.