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EDITORIAL

Peter McGill, Tizard Centre

In Memoriam: Jim Mansell 1952-2012

By the time this is published most readers will be aware of Jim's death, from cancer, on 13th March 2012. I am writing this, however, just a week after his death and it is fresh and painful. Jim was the founding Director of the Tizard Centre and the founding Editor of Tizard Learning Disability Review. The development of TLDR demonstrated his concern not just with conducting academic research but with the dissemination of research findings so that the lives of people with learning disabilities and their families might be improved. He was also cognizant of the great contribution that could be made by practitioners, families and people with learning disabilities themselves to defining and addressing the central issues in our field.

I am not writing an obituary here. But I do wish to briefly rehearse the highlights of Jim's career and comment on the particular strengths that he brought to the task of improving lives.

Jim's first significant involvement with learning disability was, as for many people, accidental. As an 18 year old student at Cardiff University studying zoology he volunteered to help take young people with learning disabilities from the local hospital on a trip into the "community". He later recalled the impact this experience had on him – how poorly dressed the disabled individuals were, how people came out of their houses to press money into his hands, so pitiable was the sight. This, remember, was only just over 40 years ago. Many of us have had similar experiences but few have responded as clearly and radically as Jim did. He recognised immediately that people with learning disabilities should not be living like this, indeed should not be living in a hospital at all. Within a few weeks he was pressing for the hospital's closure! The effect on his own career was also substantial. He changed from studying zoology to studying social administration and, some years later, having completed a Master's degree and set up a house which he and other students shared with people who had previously lived in the hospital (Mansell, 1976), Jim left a legacy in Cardiff of the seeds of

the “NIMROD” experiment – one of the first comprehensive attempts to support people with learning disabilities to live in ordinary housing (Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Community Health Councils, 1977).

Jim went on to work with Albert Kushlick and David Felce in Southampton as part of a nationally funded research unit. Here, as well as being involved in the evaluation of some of the first locally-based small hospital units (e.g. Felce et al., 1980) he and his colleagues also provided the clearest evidence yet seen in the UK that hospitals of any kind were not needed. Jim, with David Felce, Sandy Toogood, and others, established a house in Andover for people from the local area who had previously been hospitalised (Felce, 1988; Mansell et al., 1987). The key thing here was that there were no exclusion criteria – these were severely disabled people, some with additional impairments, some with behaviour described as challenging, the very people thought at the time (and even now by some) to not be able to live in the “community”. As well as demonstrating that more ordinary living was perfectly possible for this group, the Andover work also provided the seeds of the concept of “active support” (Mansell, 1998). Active support reflected the simple notion that people with learning disabilities should be supported to get involved in everyday activities rather than, on the one hand, be left to do nothing while others scurried around “serving” them or, on the other, be encouraged to get involved in gratuitously childish or meaningless activities. The work Jim, David, Sandy and others did in Andover laid the foundations for the establishment of active support as a key element of supporting people with learning disabilities, especially those with more complex needs.

Jim took up a lectureship at the University of Kent in 1983. This was a joint appointment with the South East Thames Regional Health Authority which was looking for support with their plans to close hospitals (especially Darenth Park and Leybourne Grange) in the Region. Jim quickly established himself both in the University and in the Region. By 1986 he had formed around him a team of about 10 staff, some working on a range of staff training initiatives, some on the Special Development Team project. The latter was a typical Jim Mansell project. Most health authorities (and learning

disability was still primarily a health issue at the time) were planning to house people with severe learning disabilities whose behaviour was described as challenging in special units of some kind. Drawing on his previous experience, Jim suggested a radical alternative – establishing a team of people who would support local health authorities to establish ordinary houses in their local areas. The Team (led by Eric Emerson and, later, myself) helped establish such services for 22 people over the next 5 years (Mansell et al., 2001). These were the people regarded by the hospitals as the most challenging of all their “inmates”.

As a result of this project and his other work, Jim became increasingly influential on the national scene. He chaired a Department of Health committee that led to the first “Mansell report” (DH, 1993), an extremely clear statement of what local services needed to do to serve those seen as most challenging. He became a Trustee of United Response and a Commissioner, first with the National Care Standards Commission and then with the Commission for Social Care Inspection. Latterly he also wrote “Raising Our Sights”, a report for the Department of Health on the needs of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities (Mansell, 2010). He also remained extremely active, however, in more academic ways. In particular, he built (in collaboration with Julie Beadle-Brown) on the earlier work on active support. He and Julie developed training materials on “person-centred active support” (Mansell et al., 2005), undertook a number of research projects demonstrating the impact of active support (e.g., Mansell et al., 2002) and worked in collaboration with a number of large service providers (in the UK, Australia and Europe) to introduce active support across their provision.

This brief review only touches on some of Jim’s many achievements. There is a lot of talk about leadership these days. Jim was one of the best examples of leadership you could find. He saw clearly what was needed, defined the agenda for change and took people with him as he set out to achieve that change. He leaves a substantial legacy, not just in terms of his more concrete achievements but especially in the many people whom he has influenced. In an academic context Jim was a professor for over 20 years. During this time his academic leadership had a substantial influence on the kind of

teaching and research carried out at the Tizard Centre and elsewhere. I would pick out two aspects of Jim's academic leadership in particular – an emphasis on rigour and evidence, and a broad rather than narrow view of the world and the forces operating in it. Most important of all, however, is the emphasis Jim placed throughout his career on the impact of the work he and others carried out on the lives of individuals with learning disabilities and their families. This is the defining feature of Jim's professional life. He was interested in doing work that had an impact for good in the world.

The Current Issue

I am very pleased that the first article in the current issue is a discussion of personalisation by Simon Duffy. Simon's article is based on his 2011 Tizard Annual Lecture¹. His article provides both a useful overview of the development of notions of personalisation and a challenging discussion of the problems of turning good ideas into routine good practice. The article by Sarah Broadhurst, Kathryn Yates and Brenda Mullen, and the accompanying commentary by Jill Davies, illustrate such problems very nicely in the context of transition. As the article notes, many attempts have been made to improve transition experiences but there have been few notable successes. The 'bias for action' which the authors identify as a central element of the *My Way* programme was, coincidentally, a central element underpinning the staff training and service development initiatives led by Jim Mansell in the 1980s (Mansell et al, 1987). Good planning is great but it has to be accompanied by persistent, directed action to be effective.

The *Trends* piece by Eric Emerson and Gyles Glover is the first of what is planned to be a number of articles from the Learning Disability Public Health Observatory. As noted by the authors, a key element of the Observatory's work is to collate and disseminate information about learning disability, a mission highly consistent with that of TLDR.

Authors and reviewers

¹ Since the early 2000s the Tizard Centre has invited annually an eminent speaker to deliver a public lecture at the University of Kent relating to community care. Previous speakers have included academics, politicians and professionals from both the UK and abroad.

Obviously, no journal survives without authors and reviewers. Yet, publication is often seen as its own reward and the reward for reviewers is even more obscure. I was very pleased therefore to be asked by Emerald (as publisher of TLDR) to participate in their Literati Awards scheme. After consultation with the editorial board I have made the following nominations for 2011:

Outstanding article

Alan Leyin "Improving access to psychological therapies for people with learning disabilities", 16(5) 29-37.

Highly commended articles

Sandy Toogood, Steven Boyd, Andy Bell and Helen Salisbury "Self-injury and other challenging behaviour at intervention and ten years on: a case study", 16(1), 18-29

Charlotte Spencer, "Employment: what we have learned", 16(2), 33-38

Eric Emerson, Chris Hatton, Richard Hastings, David Felce, Andrew McCulloch and Paul Swift, "The health of people with autistic spectrum disorders", 16(4), 36-44.

Outstanding reviewers - Steven Carnaby and Tony Osgood.

I am grateful, of course, to all authors and reviewers for the tremendous contribution that they make to TLDR.

In memoriam: Alan Clarke 1922-2011

I am also very sorry to mark the passing of Professor Alan Clarke here. While I never met him, his work in the 1950s demonstrating that people with learning disabilities could learn complex tasks with appropriate education and training was very influential in the increasing provision of opportunities to people who had previously been discarded by the wider society. He played a significant role in the establishment of the International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disability and the several editions of the book "Mental Deficiency: The Changing

Outlook" he edited with his wife, Ann Clarke, made a major contribution to the education of academics and professionals for some thirty years.

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