

A W A R D N E W S

WINTER 2007

All Wales Alliance for Research and Development in Health and Social Care
Cynghrair Cymru Gyfan ar Gyfer Ymchwil a Datblygiad mewn Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol

AWARD is uniquely placed in Wales to contribute high quality research evidence on which policy for health and social care can be built. This issue of the **AWARD** newsletter focuses on the various ways in which **AWARD**'s work is helping to build effective policy in Wales and beyond.

AWARD's work enables high quality evidence to be available within policy related decision-making processes. It contributes towards a culture in which new evidence, science and knowledge are essential pre-requisites to policy formation, key to the mature political culture that Wales seeks to become.

At the core of **AWARD**'s work are five research projects a year, funded by the Wales Office for Research and Development (WORD). These studies are selected on the basis of their policy relevance so that the findings can feed into future policy decisions. Final project reports (available on the **AWARD** website) are used to inform the relevant policy division of the Welsh Assembly Government.

AWARD members also work with policy leads from the Welsh Assembly, the UK or local government on a range of research projects e.g. **AWARD** and PHIRN (Public Health Improvement Research Network) worked with other researchers on an audit of exercise referral schemes in Wales before a nation-wide scheme was rolled out.



The development of evidence based policy provides the common ground for **AWARD** and policy makers to work together. Areas where **AWARD** has played an important contribution include:

- undertaking reviews of the existing evidence base
- highlighting gaps in research
- undertaking evaluations of policy initiatives

Examples of recently commissioned work include: the review of excess winter deaths; the evaluation of Book Prescription Wales; and the development of a framework for research and evaluation for Chronic Conditions Management policy in Wales. More examples are presented inside this newsletter.

Dr Michael Shepherd, **AWARD** Regional Director, says:

"This kind of cumulative development of evidence-based policy is important to the development of more sophisticated policy-relevant research and to the improvement of service delivery in Wales."

Contents

Page 1: How **AWARD** helps build effective policy

Page 2 & 3: Examples of **AWARD** research which feeds into policy

Page 4: **AWARD** conferences
AWARD website relaunch
How you can contact **AWARD**



Swansea University
Prifysgol Abertawe

AWARD research projects which link to

Studying the effects of the Carers Strategy in England & Wales

Members of the **AWARD** North Wales team, in collaboration with colleagues from Swansea University, have recently completed a three-year study looking at the effects of the National Strategy for Carers. This work was funded by the Department of Health. A parallel study of the Carers Strategy in Wales, funded by **WORD**, is in progress. Both studies seek to:

1. Estimate the effect over time that the Carers Strategy has had on the health and quality of life of carers.
2. Explore the process and outcomes of carer assessment.
3. Consider whether the Carers Strategy has been successful in promoting a wider range of services to meet carer needs.

Taking a multi-method approach to assess change, the studies have involved: postal surveys of carers; face-to-face interviews with carers and those they care for; carer focus groups; and, telephone interviews with staff from the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Results so far indicate that translating the objectives of the Strategy into practice has proved challenging; the Strategy has achieved only limited success in promoting a wider range of services to support carers. Many carers continue to experience services as inflexible and unresponsive and there is only limited evidence to suggest that, over time, service providers are thinking creatively about ways to meet carer needs.



At local level, there is support for the aims and objectives of the Strategy. However, several factors have hindered the development of local Carer Strategies. For example, joint working amongst stakeholder organisations to develop Strategies that reflect the broad spectrum of carer needs has proved difficult as the level of priority organisations accord to carer support varies considerably.

The research has identified a number of practical, professional and organisational barriers to implementation of the Strategy and to the delivery of outcome focused assessment and support. These include the limited funding available to support specialist carer posts, confusion over what constitutes a carer service and the limited attention paid to monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. Key messages for practice relate to engaging with carers as partners in the care process and enhancing the creative capacity of service organisations.

For further information, please contact Diane Seddon [d.seddon@bangor.ac.uk]

Developing a framework for evaluation of the Welsh Chronic Conditions Management Policy

AWARD has worked closely with policy makers over several years in planning the development, implementation and evaluation of Welsh Chronic Conditions Management policy.

The Welsh Assembly Government policy lead successfully secured **AWARD**'s services for successive years which has allowed single-year projects to build into a longer term evaluation of policy. **AWARD** has developed a Framework for Research and Evaluation for the Chronic Conditions Management policy and is now working with local health boards to support evaluation planning alongside policy implementation.

Prof Helen Snooks, who has led these **AWARD** projects, values the working relationship.

SHARP

The policy making process itself was examined in the Sustainable Health Action Research Programme (SHARP) which is the subject of a new book from **AWARD** members and colleagues.

Community health and wellbeing: action research on health inequalities is a multi-authored book which critically examines the experience of the five year Sustainable Health Action Research Programme (SHARP) in Wales in relation to current literature on policy, community health and health inequalities and action research. **AWARD** members Alison Porter, Gareth Williams, Helen Snooks and Angela Evans are among the editorial team and key contributors.

Improving health in populations in which health is poor is a complex process. This book argues that the traditional government approach of exhorting individuals to live healthier lifestyles is not enough - action to promote public health needs to take place not just through public agencies but also by engaging community assets and resources in their broadest sense.

current policy

"The opportunity to work with policy makers alongside policy development has been welcomed by **AWARD**, so that evaluation of policy can be built into implementation plans. Ultimately this gives us the opportunity to understand what works for patients and service users, and produce evidence that can inform future service and policy development in Wales and more widely," she said.

Helen Howson, who commissioned the work as Head of Chronic Conditions and Community Health Policy in the Department of Health and Social Services, has also seen opportunities arising from a good relationship with the **AWARD** research team.

"The **AWARD** scheme has provided an excellent vehicle by which we have been able to work alongside researchers to inform, monitor and develop policy and strategy at national and local levels."

The book discusses how the SHARP programme produced opportunities for developing general concepts and theory about community based policy developments that are relevant across national boundaries. It shows that complex and sustained community action and effective local partnership are fundamental elements in successfully addressing health inequalities. Authors argue for bolder, more flexible approaches in using knowledge to build health policy.

Community Health and Wellbeing: action research on health inequalities was published in October by the Policy Press, price £19.99, and launched at a seminar on health inequalities at Cardiff University.



www.policypress.org.uk

The Health, Social Care and Housing needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) older people: literature review

Two policy priorities drove the decision by WORD (the Welsh Office for Research and Development in Health and Social Care) to commission **AWARD** to undertake a literature review into the Health, Social Care and Housing needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender older people. The research was required as part of implementing the Strategy for Older People in Wales. It also followed a ministerial commitment to further the aims of inclusivity, equality and diversity that underlie the Strategy for Older People in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government 2003).

The literature review was commissioned to:

- Map existing research on the health, social care and housing of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender older people.
- Provide the background for a full research exercise to be completed.
- Identify priority areas for further research.



The literature reported a failure amongst service providers to acknowledge the needs of sexual minority users. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender older people have particular needs for mental health services and social care and experience risks to their physical health. Reports of rates of mental distress are contentious given that research has historically categorised sexual minority identities as being pathological. Research on transgender people in this field as in others is scarce.

Institutional discrimination can directly impact on the quality of care provided and may result in excluding LGBT people from access to care, result in delays or poorer quality of care and may exclude carers from proper access to patients. Supportive networks appear important in maintaining self-esteem in the face of discrimination. Lesbian and gay people in particular have been found to rely on durable friendship networks.

Factors that are likely to have a major effect on the health, social care and housing needs of all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender older people in Wales are:

- cultural difference, class and language group
- living in a rural area
- experiencing a disability
- experiencing domestic violence
- potential discrimination by institutions (intended or indirect)

A range of recommendations for policy and practice are suggested in the report prepared by **AWARD**. Presentations were also made to the Welsh Assembly Government health and social care policy leads and to conferences.

For further information, please contact Myfanwy Davies [daviesmm@cardiff.ac.uk]

CONFERENCES



QUIC/AWARD CONFERENCE

It's All In The Mix

5 December 2007 Swansea

This conference on combining methods effectively in Health Services Research is jointly hosted by **AWARD** and Qualitative Inquiry Cymru (QUIC). Key speakers in the field of mixed methods include Professor Max Bergman, University of Basel; Professor Angela Coulter, Picker Institute, Europe; Dr Alicia O'Cathain, University of Sheffield; and Dr Catherine Pope, University of Southampton.

NORTH WALES AWARD CONFERENCE

University of Bangor, March 2007

Underpinned by three key themes - improving health, improving care, improving knowledge - the one day conference aimed to promote research and development in health and social care and to provide a forum for debate about how best to generate robust evidence that will influence future policy and practice. Around 70 delegates attended, including health and social care practitioners and academics involved in health and social care research.



AWARD WEBSITE RELAUNCH

We are relaunching our website in January. A redesign will make the pages brighter and easier to navigate.

Go to www.awardresearch.org.uk to:

- Find out more about what **AWARD** is currently up to
- Get information about forthcoming conferences, seminars and training events
- View copies of reports and recent publications
- Learn more about **AWARD** team members



HOW YOU CAN CONTACT AWARD

We are always interested in hearing from people who want to develop new collaborative research projects. You can contact us in three ways:

Website: www.awardresearch.org.uk

Telephone: 0845 601 8545

Post: FREEPOST AWARD

We hope you find this newsletter interesting. We would welcome comments and suggestions for items in further issues. Please pass on this newsletter to colleagues you think may be interested. For additional copies or to be added to the mailing list, please contact Sherry Jenkins (tel 01792 602346 or email S.A.Jenkins@swansea.ac.uk).

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please ask us to amend our mailing list and remove your name.