



Social Services Research Group

... The network for research information planning &
evaluation in social care & health services

www.ssrp.org.uk

ANNUAL REPORT

January – December 2003

Introduction

This SSRG Annual Report 2003-04 contains the activities of SSRG over the last 12 months. It sets out the progress we have made with our action plan and strategies, and gives an account of our membership and budgetary position. Executive Committee members have contributed to the contents of the report which meets our constitutional requirements to inform the SSRG membership of the running of the organisation.

SSRG Chair's Annual Report

APRIL 2004

Over the last three years I have written the Chairs part of the annual report, cataloguing what we have been doing and trying to assess how much has been achieved. Looking through the report two messages strike me about the last twelve months.

Firstly, SSRG has covered a huge amount of ground for a voluntary network organisation. Secondly, this has been achieved in a constantly changing and turbulent environment. While much of the detail is provided by other Executive Committee members in this report I would like to give a general account of what we have been doing using the SSRG Action Plan agreed in April 2003.

In April 2003 the SSRG Action Plan for 2003/2004 was presented to the AGM and its contents were agreed. This Action Plan gave the Executive Committee direction and detailed tasks to achieve its objectives. The Action Plan had the following three objectives:

- We continue to **promote the place of research**, information, planning and evaluation activities in the social care & health worlds.
- We **expand the community** of interest in research, information, planning and evaluation.
- We increase and **improve the profile** of the SSRG network nationally, regionally and locally.

1. PROMOTING THE PLACE OF RESEARCH, INFORMATION, PLANNING AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES IN THE SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH WORLDS.

We have progressed this objective through the following activities;

- **Extend Partnerships with targeted Universities, independent research organisations, health and social care and civil service communities.**

Our main efforts here have been with three organisations connected to Universities, which are the newly forming Assembly (Colin Kelsey is representing SSRG on this body and doing sterling work here) and the Academy. Our health contacts have been mainly through the UK Federation of Primary Care Research Networks, and we are in continuing discussions with them about a programme of collaborative activities with our "sister" network organisation in health. Mick Bond is hoping to organise a joint regional event with health colleagues in the next six months.

While our connections with the Department of Health have remained strong, these have been disturbed by major changes in the personnel and organisation of the Department of Health. One feature of this has been the relocation of children's services into the Department of Education and Skills. Terry Davies has been a continuing presence representing SSRG on a number of development groups.

We continue to have a close relationship with ADSS through attendance at their three committees and sub committees of Standards and Performance, Research and the Information Management Group. Alan Bunting represents SSRG at the Standards and Performance Committee, Patricia Walker attends the Information Management Group and provides some essential intelligence about an ever changing world, and Paul Kiff, along with other SSRG colleagues attend the Research Sub Committee.

- **Deliver a programme of workshops and events of interest to the research community.**

The responsibility of organising events has been shared between EC members, and David Henderson has again taken the lead in organising an impressive programme for our forthcoming 2004 Annual Workshop, and helped put together a very successful November 2003 national conference in Birmingham charting the press of the performance management agenda. We had a joint event in October 2003 with SEROG in Brighton on research ethics and research governance. Martin Stevens and Margaret Cooney helped organise this very successful event. We are currently organising a joint event in May with REU on the theme of Research and the Black Communities. Jenny Wilding, Elijah Collins and Patricia Walker, with help from Clive Harris, have put in place a very impressive day programme that is attracting national attention.

- **Influence the modernising agenda nationally by being party to new research and management information developments.**

The key areas we have concentrated effort here has been the continuing consultation on research governance frameworks and the development of PAF through attending a number of DoH groups. ADSS reflected on their Standards and Performance Management Committee and elected a new chair looked again at where they put their effort. SSRG has been actively involved in those discussions.

2. EXPANDING THE COMMUNITY OF INTEREST IN RESEARCH, INFORMATION, PLANNING AND EVALUATION

We have progressed this objective through the following activities:

- **Increase our membership and progress our Membership Strategy.**

Please see the Membership Secretary's report setting out the profile of our membership and what has been achieved by Margaret Cooney and other EC colleagues in maintaining and extending our membership base.

- **Develop new alliances with social care research organisations.**

While we have continuing contact with university colleagues we have not yet re established relations with SWRA or made approaches to SRA. This area of activity will need to be developed in the future.

3. INCREASING AND IMPROVING THE PROFILE OF THE SSRG NETWORK NATIONALLY, REGIONALLY AND LOCALLY

We have progressed this objective through the following activities:

- **Progress our Marketing and Communications Strategy.**

The encouraging start made by Sue Simmons and EC colleagues to update our logo and publications has placed us in a good position for raising the profile of SSRG further. Sues departure from the EC because of a job change has temporarily stalled our programme of activity in this area, but we have recently recruited Rob Hall from NCH to take up our Marketing and Communications Strategy and move it on.

In particular, we have agreed with SCIE to make improvements to our website which will take place over the next 3 months, David Henderson has substantially improved the quality of our Newsletter, and the editorial board of RPP has improved the layout of the journal, and ensured a regular supply of material. Jill Manthorpe and newly appointed Jo Moriarty have continued to make RPP a vibrant and relevant journal in the social care field, with the able assistance of an extended Editorial Board and newly formed Advisory Group. We still need to co-ordinate the revising and updating of our policy statements on the website.

- **Implementation of the Equal Opportunities Action Plan to increase representation and participation of minority groups in SSRG activities**

Our Equal Opportunities Policy and Action Plan has been revised and updated this year. Can I take the opportunity of saying thank you to Jenny Wilding for leading on this work. We have concentrated our efforts looking at discriminatory research practice with black and minority ethnic communities. We have analysed our own membership base, and identified an under representation of black and minority ethnic researchers. We have been working with REU to organise a day event to attract those researchers with an interest in the racial and cultural dimensions of research activity, with a hope that we build on this event to put in place a programme of activities.

- **Increase the active contributions of members**

We have co opted Elijah Collins from Worcestershire onto the EC. Elijah has interests in user involvement, though much of his energy over the last six months has been spent on the joint event with REU. Two colleagues worked with Nick Miller to produce a critical appraisal of where we are with the PAF indicators currently, and what steps DoH need to take to improve performance management in social care.

Mick Bond has also been co-opted onto the EC to help stimulate our thinking on collaborative work with health colleagues. Mick works in a research health setting currently and has previous work experience in social services, so he is well placed to help develop links here.

- **Improving communications with members through expanding the website and e-mail facilities, and increasing the co-ordination of administrative activities.**

SCIE have been the host organisation for the SSRG website, and have helped maintain it and bring about some developments. We have recently agreed a framework document with SCIE to strengthen our working relationship. This includes developing an interactive website facility with members to alert them to new items of news and provide new information.

Diane Gwynne- Smith has been co-opted from SCIE onto our EC.

We have connected up our membership database, financial management arrangements and administration of our events to help streamline our administrative systems and provide a more responsive service to our members.

- **Encouraging regional activity with financial and EC support.**

The SouthEast region and SSRG Scotland have had particularly active programmes over the last twelve months. Active support has been given to Scotland in ensuring a series of day events were well attended and well received. We will continue to support our regions and consider what actions we can take to expand regional activity in the future.

CONCLUDING POINTS

We set an ambitious yet straightforward action plan to strengthen our position as an independent network organisation, seeking to maintain our principles of promoting the place of research in the public sector, while expanding our influence and profile. We have achieved many of the actions and targets we set for ourselves over the last twelve months, but there is still a lot to be done. We need to give particular attention to getting members more actively involved in our programme of activities.

We also continue to maintain a healthy financial position following our successful events. All Executive Committee members have worked hard at making the last twelve months successful for SSRG, and can I take the opportunity of thanking them for making the last twelve months so successful. Can I particularly thank Jackie Watson, who is our paid Co-ordinator, and looks after our administrative systems and the support arrangements for our events. Jackie has worked hard at updating and integrating our systems, and so a big thanks to her.

We look to have new members joining SSRG this year, and pulling some old members who have had career changes back into the fold. We continue to have ambitions for SSRG next year with a programme of activities and improvements to take us forward. Let's hope the coming twelve months will be as exciting and progressive as the previous twelve months.

David Allan
Chair SSRG
March 2004

Secretary's Report

There are currently 18 people who make up the Executive Committee of SSRG. During 2003 an average of 12 EC members met every two months at the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) in London. The actual number of attendees at each meeting was as follows:

	Number of Attendees
EC meeting, January 2003	9
EC meeting, March 2003	Not recorded
EC meeting, May 2003	15
EC meeting, July 2003	10
EC meeting, September 2003	12
EC Awayday, September 2003	12
EC meeting, November 2003	13

During 2003 there were a number of changes to the membership of the Executive Committee with several people stepping down due to work commitments. Two new co-opted members joined the EC and I took on the role of secretary in July. In addition to this a new member has recently joined who is responsible for marketing and communications.

During 2003 the EC has become increasingly involved with contributing to the important national priorities such as Research Governance, performance management and information management. The EC regularly discusses the planning for SSRG events, the membership strategy, the Newsletter, Research Policy and Practice and issues concerning equal opportunities and diversity. In addition to this the EC continues to be involved in collaborative working with key organisations such as the Department of Health and ADSS, etc.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the Executive Committee for making me feel welcome and I look forward to continuing my work with SSRG.

Faye McNiven
Secretary
March 2004

Treasurer's Report - 2004

Summary of Accounts at 31st December 2003.

At 31st December 2003 the financial position of SSRG was £15,873.61 (the accumulated funds), as compared with £15,856.78 in 2002.

Total income during the year was £51,329.46 as compared with £46,774.14 in 2002.

The total expenditure during the year was £51,312.63 as compared with £44,069.31 in 2002.

The accounts show an overall surplus of £16.83 as compared to the previous year's figure of £2,704.83.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2002 and 2003

	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>
	£	£
<u>INCOME</u>		
Membership	12,361.00	15,158.00
Journal	3,965.00	750.00
Conferences, Courses etc.	30,114.00	33,469.00
Miscellaneous	334.14	1,952.46
Total	46,774.14	51,239.46
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>		
Administration	4,426.50	7,171.38
Subscriptions	302.44	302.44
Working Groups	2,121.63	2,486.66
NEC	4,934.67	7,272.40
Newsletter	5,474.90	6,030.00
Journal	6,027.12	6,220.11
Conferences, Courses etc.	20,419.39	21,116.58
Miscellaneous	362.66	713.06
Total	44,069.31	51,312.63
Surplus for Year	2,704.83	16.83

Projections for 2004

Expenditure

Projection using baseline figure of 2003 expenditure of £51,312.63 with a 2.5% inflationary increase, plus an additional sum of £3,000 for marketing and communications strategy = Total **£55,595.45**

Income

Projection based on 2003 data:

Equates to a projected Membership income of: £17,000.00

Conferences (i.e. Annual Workshop and day events, total income estimated at similar level to 2003, including sponsorship) £33,500.00

Journal income £ 700.00

Estimated bank interest £ 90.00

Projected Total = **£51,290.00**

Projected deficit £ 4,305.45

Commentary

A slight increase in membership numbers plus excellent attendance at the annual workshop and the seminar on performance development boosted the overall income for SSRG in 2003.

However, as an organisation SSRG is facing a number of key issues:

1. the organisation is fast approaching the threshold for VAT registration. This is a complex issue, which has been taken forward by a small group of Executive Committee (EC) members and a consultant was commissioned to investigate the VAT registration issues for SSRG. We are currently awaiting a response from H.M Customs and Excise
2. we are facing the need to finance increased costs of running the organisation. For example:

In recent times as the public and academic sectors have become much more constrained by financial and time pressures, officers of SSRG (elected, appointed or co-opted) have found less time to undertake SSRG activity within "office hours"

Furthermore, the historical custom and practice whereby some EC officers 'subsidised' SSRG activity (with their managers agreement) by facilitating other staff within their organisations to contribute their time/resources to administrative work has, in the main, now ceased.

With the result that much 'administrative' work now has to be accomplished by paying for the tasks to be completed, for example:

Newsletter, each edition now has administrative costs of between £300-£360

RPP, each edition now has administrative costs of between £125-£270

PAF Performance Indicator Critiques (adults and children's volumes)

Also historically SSRG was fortunate to obtain a level of subsidised postage (provided within organisations). Again this has now ceased in the much more stringent financial environs of the public/academic sectors. Leading to an increase in postage costs for SSRG, for example:

Newsletter, each edition now has postage costs of between £110 - £215

RPP, each edition now has postage costs of between £200 - £310

The higher profile of SSRG has also had impacts e.g.:

More conferences/workshops lead to the requirement to provide more support to administer bookings, invoicing etc

SSRG representation on working groups (i.e. DoH, ADSS, SCIE, etc), representation of SSRG at ADSS events etc, with the associated costs of attendance

Developing the SSRG Web site

SSRG also initiated a Part-Time Paid Co-ordinator in 1994/5, to assist with day-to-day administration tasks, with an agreement to undertake up to 20 days work per annum.

By 2003 this had increased to the equivalent of 31 days input per annum.

The EC consider that the cost of membership of SSRG still represents a very good economic proposition (as can be seen from the brief summary attached at page 5).

Action

The EC will be seeking authorisation from the AGM to implement a broad financial strategy to increase income, thereby, ensuring that there would be a minimum of a break-even situation for 2004 and 2005.

1. To extend the events programme for SSRG in 2004 and 2005
2. To seek to increase the charges made for SSRG events From September 2004 by a minimum of 10% (i.e. any day events and the annual workshop in 2005)
3. To seek to increase the rate of subscription for Research, Policy and Planning only from the existing rate of £45.00 to a more competitive market rate.

and

4. If necessary to increase membership fees by up to £5 in 2005

to maximum as follows:

1st corporate membership £64.00;
2nd/subsequent corporate membership £49.00;
personal £59.00; plus
student/unwaged no change £35.00)

Note.

Any members wishing to view a full statement of accounts should contact the Treasurer directly:

**Mr. A Bunting (SSRG), Salford City Council,
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Crompton House, 100 Chorley Road,
Swinton, Salford M27 6BP
Tel: 0161 793 2868 Fax: 0161 794 0197
e-mail: alan.bunting@salford.gov.uk**

Comparison of Membership Rates and Benefits

	LARIA (2003)			SRA (2003)		SSIN (2003)	SSRG (2003)				CIPFA (2004)	
Type of Membership	Associate	Full	Corporate	Full	Student/ Unwaged	Corporate	1 st Corporate	2 nd / subsequent Corporate	Personal	Student/ Unwaged	Full	Retired
Cost £	Free	5.00	55.00	45.00	12.00	85.00	59.00	44.00	54.00	35.00	250.00	38.00
Benefits	3 issues of LARIA news pa	Members may vote at AGM and stand for office for LARIA	Up to 3 copies of 3 issues of LARIA news pa	Free Newsletter four times a year	Free Newsletter four times pa	A directory of members and contacts	6 Newsletters pa per member				Formal use of organisational identity (i.e. use of initials after name)	
	Receive details of LARIA events and publications	3 issues of LARIA news pa	Receive details of LARIA events and publications	Inclusion of details in SRA membership directory. All members receive a free copy of the directory	Inclusion of details in SRA membership directory. All members receive a free copy of the directory	Two copies of a regular newsletter	3 copies of the Journal: Research Policy and Planning (RPP) pa per member				Magazine once per week	
		Receive details of LARIA events and publications	Discounts on the price of attending any LARIA event for any staff currently in their employment			Access at a reduced rate to workshops and seminars on topical subjects	Receive details of SSRG events and publications (and selected other organisations events/publications)					
	But not entitled to discounts on LARIA events and publications unless they are also working for organisations that are Corporate Members	Discounts on the prices of LARIA publications	Discounts on SRA Training Days, Seminars, Social Events & Conferences	Discounts on SRA Training Days, Seminars, Social Events & Conferences	Copy of conference reports	Discounts on the price of attending the Annual Workshop, plus any seminars and training events						
		Entitled to display at no cost job adverts on the LARIA web site				Reduced subscription rate for the International Journal of Social Research	Reduced subscription rate for the International Journal of Social Research	Password access to a mailing list and members area on SSIN web site	Password access to members area on SSRG web site. (Including access to Directory of Members interests/contacts, events, full text of newsletters, past papers from annual workshop/seminars/events etc, text of RPP, publications, discussion area, notice board, etc)			
		But do not have voting rights (except individuals who are also Full Members)	Regional meetings and activities	Members may vote at AGM and stand for office for SSRG								
								Entitled to display at no cost job adverts in SSRG newsletter or on the SSRG web site				
							Regional meetings and activities					

Membership Update

The current number of members is at 346, including 51 new members for 2004. Fourteen members have not renewed their membership for 2004 (4.6%). Over three-quarters of members are corporate members.

There has been a range of methods used to recruit new members, including EC representatives recruiting new members at workshop and events, sending membership forms with the workshop programme. In December 2003, a letter and information pack was sent to the Head of Performance in the 253 authorities where there was not a current member.

Three quarters of current members work in local authority settings. Regional representation has increased in all areas with the exception of Southwest region.

There is a need to focus on recruiting members from the health sector and universities as well as independent research organisations.

The leaflet outlining advantages to membership has been redrafted and is being reprinted for 2004.

The format of the database of members is being redesigned for 2004 so all events and workshop activity will be attributed to the one database.

At the AGM in 2003, it was agreed that the membership fee for 2003 rise by £10 in each category.

The membership database is available on the SSRG website with the exception of where members have stated that they do not wish their details to be made public.

A membership survey was not undertaken during 2003, however there will be one undertaken in 2004.

Thank you to Jackie Watson, our co-ordinator for developing the membership database, and thank you to Karen Winchester for maintaining the website database.

Margaret Cooney
March 2004.

Equal Opportunities

Towards the end of last year the SSRG Equal Opportunities Policy was updated and an Action Plan was developed to accompany it. These were presented to the AGM at the Annual Workshop in March.

Since then work has been undertaken to implement the Action Plan as follows:

- An analysis of the membership by ethnic origin, gender and disability, confirmed that the SSRG has few members of black and minority ethnic origin or disabled members, and this is reflected in the membership of the Executive Committee.
- As part of the strategy to address this a one-day conference on black and minority ethnic issues in research is being planned for May 2004. It is being organised jointly with the Race Equality Unit and will be targeted at black and minority ethnic researchers, policy makers and others as well as current SSRG members. In this way the SSRG hopes to expand current members' awareness, knowledge and skills in relation to diversity issues and widen its appeal and membership.
- A one-day event was held jointly with SEARIG in Brighton in October, which focused on standards in research including ethical issues and the involvement of users.
- The Executive Committee ensured that the annual workshop addressed equal opportunity issues in its content and offered free places to personal assistants / carers of delegates who need support and subsidised places to users and carers assisted by social services.
- The newsletter continues to include articles related to various equal opportunity issues.

Jenny Wilding
 Patricia Walker
 Elijah Collins
 March 2003

SSRG Newsletter

The Newsletter is the main vehicle through which SSRG disseminates information about issues relating to research, policy and planning in health and social care.

Six copies of the Newsletter were published during the year ending 31st December 2003 and regular contributions were received from EC and other colleagues who represent SSRG on groups such as the ADSS IMG, ADSS Research group and the DH Technical Working Group.

It is felt that the appearance has been improved through the inclusion of more illustrations, most notably the regular appearance of 'Zen' for which thanks are due to Faye McNiven.

However, some members have commented that there needs to be more articles of a 'less serious' nature and to this effect I appeal to members for contributions!

More work will be done in the coming year to ensure that the content of the Newsletter represents all parts of the SSRG network (i.e. English regions, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland). The EC will also be looking at how we might use the Newsletter as a means of generating income.

Finally, I would like to thank Jenny Edwards in Shropshire for her work in setting up the Newsletter, and to Dataplus in Belfast who print and distribute the Newsletter

David Henderson
Newsletter Editor March 2004

Annual Workshop and other Events

SSRG Annual Workshop 2003: "Quality, Inequality and Diversity in Social Care and Health"

This event took place on Monday 7th, Tuesday 8th and Wednesday 9th April and was held for a second year at the University of Leicester. It covered a range of issues such as tackling health inequalities, involving service users and evaluation of services.

SSRG is grateful to OLM, Dataplus and the Guardian for supporting the Annual Workshop for a second year.

Main Organiser: David Henderson

"Single Shared Assessment"

This event was held at Old Viewforth in Stirling on 31 March 2003, and addressed key issues in implementing the SSA in Scotland. Over 90 people attended this event that also looked at how the single assessment process is being taken forward in England.

Main Organiser: David Henderson

"Improving Standards in Research, Consultation and Information Sharing"

This event was held on 14 October 2003 at Brighton Town Hall. It was a joint SEARIG and SSRG conference and had a broad focus, covering ethical issues for researchers and commissioners of research and sharing information across agencies. Margaret Cooney provided a summary of this successful event for the November edition of SSRG news.

Main Organisers: Margaret Cooney and Martin Stevens

"Performance Indicators and Performance Assessment: Improving Services for Older People in Scotland"

This event was held in Old Viewforth in Stirling on 27 October. It provided an overview of key issues in relation to Performance Assessment in Scotland including current work, developments and areas of good practice.

Main Organiser: David Henderson.

“Developments in Performance Assessment”

This event was held at the Council House, Victoria Square in Birmingham on 28 November 2003 and proved to be one of the most popular SSRG events ever if measured by the number of people who attended.

Over 150 people saw the launch of the SSRG revised ‘guidance’ on the PAF PIs. The event looked at strengths and weaknesses of the PAF PIs and how DH was consulting with councils to review the dataset

Main Organiser: David Henderson

David Henderson,
Conference Organiser

Research Policy and Planning

The journal continues to offer a forum for researchers to publish material and for members to contribute and learn of key studies. This year RPP has seen a steady upward trend in submission of articles. We are grateful to authors, and, in particular to referees for their constructive comments. The journal has developed a new section of Research into Practice, edited by Jon Glasby who has been succeeded as book review editor by Istwyn Williams. Karen Winchester continues to provide the helpful Research Up-dating section.

RPP had its first ‘special issue’ in 2003 guest edited by Heather Wilkinson and Jill Hubbard. This was on the subject of innovations in research in dementia. A further special issue on user research is in the pipeline. At the end of the year Nicky Stanley stepped down as co-editor. Joanna Moriarty will now be co-editor with Jill Manthorpe. The editorial office has moved to King’s College London. Thanks are also due to the editorial board for the support and the Advisory Board which met for the second time this year.

Jo Moriarty and Jill Manthorpe
Joint Editors, RPP

Partnerships

1. Department of Health

➤ Technical Working Group

Terms of reference of the TWG

1. To keep under review and make recommendations to the Department of Health (DH) on the central collection of data on Personal Social Services (PSS) having regard to government policy objectives, monitoring of implementation and the costs and benefits of the information.
2. To provide a forum in which local authority staff connected with the completion of the national returns and the DH staff collecting statistics can discuss and advise the DH on the existing and proposed instrument and methods for data collection.
3. To seek to minimise the burden on local authorities of data collection.
4. To work towards data collection which is derivable from the information requirements of a local authority social services department.
5. To consider how the data quality of these returns can be improved with the goal of enabling comparability between authorities.
6. To promote the co-ordination of data collections, consistency of definition and linkages between activity, finance and staffing for PSS, and particularly with other agencies collecting data, such as Audit Commission, CIPFA, ODPM, and LGMB.
7. To consider and advise on the methods for the effective dissemination of PSS statistical data, commentary and analysis to local authorities and other interested audiences. Particularly to consider new methods to promote interest and use of the products of national data collections, such as workshops, bulletins, use of the Internet.
8. To consider issues and opportunities of data sharing and dissemination in areas of common and related interest, such as data relating to health, education, crime and make the necessary links with other national / local groups.
9. To report to the Central/Local Government Information Partnership (CLIP) on matters of general interest in local government information.
10. To act as one channel through which all local authorities can express their views on information demands and developments, and through which DH can inform and consult local authorities about its plans and thinking.

REPORT

The work of TWG is, by its nature, detailed and technical and this report covers only broad themes. Full details including agenda's, minutes and sub-group reports are published on the DH website at:

<http://www.advisorybodies.doh.gov.uk/twgpss/index.htm>

TWG met 4 times during 2003/04 and the final meeting of the year is on March 11th 2004. We also held a Local Authority side review on May 15th 2003 where Local Authority members meet to review past progress and establish priorities for the coming year. This review highlighted the fact that TWG had lost some old standing members and that the balance of the LA side needed looking at. This has resulted in a stronger LA side with new blood as well as the pensioners like me. A strong LA side needs both. Interestingly, the competition to join TWG from LA colleagues was both very welcome and surprising.

Apart from the detailed work on individual DH returns the key features of the year were:

- The transfer of children's statistics to the DfES. There is now a joint chair of the TWG and a Children's Working Group has been established. The Working Group has met once and this was a very positive meeting with Malcolm Britton (DeFS chair) very much supporting the partnership approach we have enjoyed with the DH over many years.
- The establishment or continuation of review groups looking across the board at DH returns and performance indicators. This is very welcome and DH policy leads are very much driving this agenda. My only concerns relate to the volume of work coming to TWG from these groups, their understandable desire to get everything implemented at once and the degree of co-ordination between all these processes.
- There is still a way to go in order to get a logical process in place when new returns are required. Without going into detail, the introduction of two new Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI 195 and BVPI 196) without any attempt to pilot has resulted in a lot of anguish for local authorities. This is compounded by the fact that the definitions did not arrive until January 2004 for the 2003/04 return! The consequences will be inevitable – all authorities will do it differently making national comparative data of little value.

Looking briefly to next year, there are some challenges and opportunities:

- DH is being downsized by 35% (so I hear) and we await the consequences for the working of TWG. It could result in fewer, more pressurised meetings.
- The proposed creation of independent data collection and processing agencies outside of DH which will handle all current returns. Will they support the current arrangements?
- The long overdue concern with data quality now being taken seriously by the DH will have an unknown impact on our role.
- The output of the review groups will need to come to TWG and there will be a capacity problem.
- Maintaining a balance on the local authority side between stability/experience and the need to attract new people.

Terry Davies, March 2003

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➤ **SSRG involvement in Research Governance**

Introduction

SSRG has continued to play an important role in the consultation about the implementation of Research Governance in Social Care, alongside many of the key organisations in the field. We have continued to support the aims of and need for the Research Governance Framework (RGF), although we have consistently raised a number of issues.

The implementation plan has been delayed partly because of the fact that responsibility for children's services has been moved to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). This creates problems for implementing research governance in social care because the RGF specifically applies only to areas under the purview of the secretary of state for health. Consequently, it will be more difficult to ensure that research concerning children's service is covered by the RGF. Furthermore, it creates an incentive to establish research governance in Councils with Social Service Responsibility (CSSRs), before local authority changes in responsibility become embedded.

SSRG activities

After Carol Lupton (the Department of Health lead for implementing the RGF in social care) spoke at the Annual Workshop in Leicester, six SSRG members have attended two meetings as part of the Department of Health (DH) consultation process (although several of these members were wearing different 'hats' at these meetings). A further meeting is planned for February 2004. SSRG members were consulted about the version of the plan that was published in September 2003 and a 'SSRG response' was submitted to Carol in October. This has been placed on the SSRG website.

The October event in Brighton, 'Raising Standards in Research, Consultation and Information-Sharing', focused on the role of the RGF in improving standards. Carol Lupton presented the latest implementation plan, and there was discussion of the issues raised. Wider questions about involving users and how the academic sector can be involved in collaborative working with CSSRs were also addressed in the presentations and discussions.

Issues raised

The following issues have been discussed at the consultation meetings and were addressed in the SSRG response.

- **Coverage:** the need to include a wide range of research activities. Currently, the draft implementation plan stipulates that only projects undertaken by external (to CSSRs) researchers or organisations will be included. SSRG's position (along with many other of the organisations involved) was that this would exclude in-house projects, which often raise equally contentious issues. At the last meeting, it was agreed that the final plan will be presented as a first step, with a clear indication that the RGF will be applied to these other activities in the future.

- **The need for resources:** we have consistently made the point that implementing research governance will require extra resources for creating an infrastructure for ethical and methods review as well as for more robust information systems for tracking research work. There will also be a need for training for CSSR staff who will be operating these new systems. Researchers from small voluntary or independent organisations may need support in negotiating the new regime, as will service user researchers. However, the prospects for extra DH funding seem slim, given the current stringencies and potential downsizing. This continues to be an important problem with the process
- **Ethical and methodological review:** ensuring that social care research is reviewed appropriately in both of these areas has been a key issue in the debate. The relationship between any new system for social care and the existing NHS Research Ethics' Committees (NHS REC) will be key. There is an acceptance that, in the short-term, it will not be possible to change the current situation in which any research involving NHS data, staff or patients will need to be approved by an NHS REC. Finding some way to avoid the need to submit proposals before more than one kind of committee will be important, if the RGF is not to slow down the research process unduly: this is an ongoing issue. It will also be very useful if ethical and methodological reviewing can be complementary processes, to avoid the situation where researchers have to meet contradictory demands.
- **Division of Responsibilities:** questions have also been raised about how the different agents involved in research have been assigned responsibilities in the RGF. How the role of sponsor applies was seen as potentially problematic, especially for in-house work, but also in other situations where these roles are not undertaken by separate agencies.

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2. ADSS

➤ Information Management Group (IMG)

This group meets four times a year. It works on behalf of the ADSS Standards and Performance Committee, on information management, communication and technology issues. It brings together representatives from regional IMG Groups, Wales and Scotland, partners such as SSRG, SOCITIM, technical systems user groups with representatives from the Department of Health. I

The group acts as a forum for exchanging information on issues in social care relating to the information agenda and advocates for social care issues to be included, and taken account of, in any developments.

Two major topics over the last year have been the developments in the national NHS IT programme, now known as NPfIT, and the development of the electronic social care record.

The NPfIT is the programme to develop electronic patient records so that healthcare professionals have access to patient information safely and easily, whenever and wherever it is needed and provided that consent and information governance criteria have been fulfilled. The programme will impact on social care whenever a person is the concern of both a health and a social care agency. The concern for IMG has been to try and ensure that social care concerns about how records are created, kept and shared are heard and taken account of. Representatives from the NPfIT attend the IMG meetings. IMG has representatives on the Information Standards Board and Advisory Forum and regional groups are working with their local NPfIT clusters.

The electronic social care record (ESCR) is the other major development. This is the programme to develop an electronic record for users of social care. A draft document on the ESCR was issued for consultation in the summer and the final document was published at the National Social Services Conference last October. Current developments are focused on developing an implementation programme.

During the year the IMG has also had presentations and discussed other topics, which have arisen through developments associated with the NPfIT or the ESCR or through changes in Government. These have included information governance and confidentiality, work on the children's core information requirements and information outputs project, developments in the DfES as children's work moves there from the DH, NSF information strategies and the single assessment process, e-learning and knowledge management.

The number and complexity of the developments in this area of work pose a major challenge for social care. The IMG is concerned as to how social care can be properly informed and adequately respond to all the different developments, especially given the speed with which some of them are moving.

The IMG has its own dedicated website, <http://www.adss-img.org.uk/>. Copies of presentations made to the group, minutes and working papers, information from regional groups and links to information relevant to the work of IMG are all available via this website. Regular reports are also made through the SSRG Newsletter.

Patricia Walker
March 2004

➤ **Standards and Performance Committee**

The first meeting of the Committee was identified for early 2004 but was rescheduled to March 2004.

However, as the Chair of the Committee is moving to the Commission for Social Care Improvement, this has been deferred until ADSS appoint a new Chair.

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➤ **Research sub-committee**

The ADDSS Research sub-committee met twice during 2003.

There have been 2 main items on the agenda - Research Governance and Disseminating best practice.

On the former, the ADSS compiled a response to the DoH proposals with considerable input from SSRG members and the two organisations sought to co-ordinate their responses so as to ensure that service users would gain from the project.

The possibility of ADSS research sub-committee becoming the equivalent of an NHS Multi-Centre Research Ethics Panel is being developed on the foundation of its existing research approval scheme

In relation to best practice dissemination, the ADSS has developed a framework agreement with SCIE on how the two organisations should work together in pursuit of the goal of achieving maximum take-up of best practice. This is likely to involve regional training-style events

The ADSS research sub-committee was unsuccessful in getting the DoH to pick up funding for its small grants for practitioner research scheme but is hoping that it can be revived.

Paul Kiff
March 2004

3. Assembly

The Assembly for Social Care and Social Work Education and Research.

Long has there been discussion, dialogue and development of ideas for an Assembly. However over the past year or so, a group of individuals has picked up on the work done in the past and has developed a statement of aims and purpose, agreed a structure, and developed a capacity for this

organisation. It is intended to hold a day seminar to test and evaluate the validity of constructing such an organisation, partly by arranging a debate on this day.

The agreed aims and purpose of the Assembly will be to:

- Promote, protect and develop the values. Knowledge and skills of social care and social work
to
- Contribute to effective practice and policy that delivers positive outcomes for service users
through
- Networking across the UK social care and social work education and research organisations.
and
- Fostering and maintaining interaction between the Assembly and Government bodies and key agencies involved in the changing social care and social work agendas.

Outputs and activities would include Position Statements compiled on key issues in changing times; Policy Responses harnessed to give a co-ordinated response back to Government consultations; Representation at gatherings where persons are required to reflect specific and unique views from social care and social work education and research; Development and Discussion bringing together members of constituent organisations to protect and promote the value, knowledge and skills base of social care and social work. In summary the Assembly would be an umbrella and networking organisation for social care and social work education and research.

It is a virtual organisation co-ordinating views and perspectives from UK wide member bodies.

Colin Kelsey
March 2004

Appendix 1

DRAFT SSRG ACTION PLAN 2004/2005

This Action Plan has been produced by SSRG Executive Committee (EC) to be agreed at the AGM on 30th March 2004.

Policy Statement	Activity to progress	Details	Responsibility
We continue to promote the place of research , information, planning and evaluation activities in the social care & health worlds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend Partnerships with targeted Universities, independent research organisations, health and social care and civil service communities. Deliver a programme of workshops and events of interest to the research community. Influence the modernising agenda nationally by being party to new research and management information developments. 	Active partnerships with The Academy, The Assembly, ADSS, DoH, DfES, CSCI, Health Networks, REU. Programme agreed, documented and timetabled. Participation with SCIE, Research Governance & PAF developments.	EC members EC Members EC members
We expand the community of interest in research, information, planning and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase our membership and progress our Membership Strategy. Develop new alliances with social care and health research organisations. 	Increased total membership and reduce numbers of members who do not renew. Establish alliances with e.g. JUC/SWEC, SWRA, SRA.	EC. Chair
We increase and improve the profile of the SSRG network nationally, regionally and locally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress our marketing and communications Strategy. Implementation of the Equal Opportunities Action Plan to increase representation and participation of minority groups in SSRG activities Increase the active contributions of members Improving communications with members through expanding the website and e-mail facilities, and increasing the co-ordination of administrative activities. Encourage and promote regional activity. 	Detailed action points in the strategy to be achieved. Detailed action points in the action Plan to be achieved. Use initiatives to draw on members expertise. Web site improvements in place, "e" mail distribution arrangements working, administration improvements achieved. Assisting regions to progress their programmes.	EC EC Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Sec. EC

David Allan, Chair of SSRG. March 2004