



Social Services Research Group

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

www.ssrp.org.uk

ANNUAL REPORT

January – December 2005

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SSRG Chair's Annual Report March 2006

Introduction

2005 saw both change and continuity for SSRG, which has to respond to a world of social care that has been radically altered over the past two or three years. Symbolic of these changes is a feeling that the time has come to change the name of the group. With the near universal demise of Local Authority Social Services Departments, there is a sense in which the name Social Services Research Group might not attract new members in newly configured organisations and might also make it more difficult for existing members to advocate for their continued membership with managers who may not have experience either of social care/social work generally, and who almost certainly will not have come across SSRG. After this year's AGM, we will be sending out ballots for a new name for the organisation. A new name needs to be owned by members, so please register your vote.

However as much as things change, we want to continue building on our long tradition of making connections between research activities across sectors, and using the SSRG network to provide the glue in an increasingly fragmented social care world, on the grounds that peoples lives will never be compartmentalised into bureaucratic blocks. Failing to maintain and develop connections (in terms of personalities, concepts and services) might result in the loss of the advantages gained from the original coming together of Children's Departments with the various adult welfare agencies into Social Services Departments. We envisage therefore that a new name will not mean a drastic change in the activities of the group, although we will continue to have to move fast in order to identify the most important current issues in a seemingly ever increasing maelstrom of policy initiatives.

In terms of the last 12 months, there has been a continuation of our highly successful programme of events. New partnerships are starting to be developed with some of the sister organisations involved with research and information for children's services. Existing partnerships with SCIE and REU for example have resulted in a second national event on research on black and minority ethnic issues. Also continuing is our involvement with various policy issues, such as Research Governance and the Green Paper on Adult Social Care.

We have been working within the framework of the SSRG Action Plan 2005/06 agreed at last year's AGM at Reading University. The plan had the following three objectives, each of which has connected actions and activities:

- 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.

This 'Chair's report' briefly highlights some of our achievements and activities that are more fully documented elsewhere in other sections of the annual report as well as outlining what we have planned for the next twelve months.

The Work of SSRG's Executive Committee (EC)

The Executive Committee has met on six occasions to oversee and progress the actions of SSRG. All meetings have been well attended, and I would like to thank EC members for their commitment, dedication and enthusiasm in getting through the work and making it another successful year for SSRG. Can I say a particular thanks to Faye McNiven, EC Secretary, who has overseen agenda planning, kept on top of the documentation and has planned our meetings well in advance with efficiency and an important eye for detail.

In September 05, the EC had an away-day at Oxford University, which focused on the functioning of the EC and how it relates to the relationships between the EC and members and resulted in plans to undertake a membership survey (the results of which are in this report) and also considered how the EC should operate.

As a result of the changes to arrangements for adults' and children's social care, there is an increased workload for the EC and for SSRG more widely, in continuing to work across these areas, about which increasingly there are separate research, performance and information agendas. For example, this has meant increased work in developing new partnerships with a range of organisations (see below). Such relationships and partnerships offer an opportunity to work with colleagues from new disciplines and areas, which should strengthen the appeal of SSRG in the long run.

Consequently, we are reconsidering the ways in which the EC operates. A children's sub-group has been set up, to ensure that we continue to reflect the interests of those involved in children's services, and we are exploring possible ways of approaching adult services. We shall be seeking members' support in taking part in the changed EC operation, which should hopefully offer opportunities to a wider group to be involved in a more sustainable way in the future. More details about this will be publicised throughout the year, for comment and suggestions (and hopefully, expressions of interest in taking part in activities).

Finances

Like any organisation, sound finances are essential in order to maximise the probability of meeting objectives. However SSRG has always prided itself that financial considerations do not drive plans and activities, although this is always a matter of emphasis. Alan Bunting, our Treasurer, gives regular reports to the EC on the state of our accounts and I am happy to report that SSRG's finances are in a healthy state with a satisfactory reserve and some surplus available to take forward our action plan. This position is a result of our success in organising well attended events (some of which have been supported financially by other organisations) as well as maintaining membership numbers and journal subscriptions. Many thanks are due to Alan Bunting for his hard work and careful stewardship of SSRG's accounts.

Programme of Events

This year has seen a series of jointly run events, covering a wide range of activities, in addition to several SSRG events, which has allowed a wider range of topics in the programme. Having sponsorship from SCIE and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation for the second joint REU/SSRG event examining Research on Racism and Ethnicity, was a particular success. Funding has been secured for at least one further event, which is planned for later in 2006. Other events have continued to address policy

developments in adults (The Adult Green Paper: Information and Performance Management) and children's' (e.g. SSRG Scotland: Integrated Children's Services Plans: Progress and Good Practice services). Many thanks are due to David Henderson for his extensive contribution in developing ideas and being the driving force behind much of the programme. Thanks are also due to several other EC members for their hard work, particularly in relation to the joint REU/SSRG event.

Equalities Policy

We have placed a great deal of emphasis on research issues associated with black and minority ethnic communities again this year, both in terms of research practitioners and communities who are party to research work. We have developed a plan, with specific targets for improving the diversity both of the wider SSRG membership and the EC.

As described above, we ran a second day conference, on 9th November 2005 with the REU (formerly the Race Equality Unit) and SCIE, which produced excellent attendance and first rate contributions. This event generated many contacts for us (as did last year's conference), and helped SSRG in its thinking about how to reflect more fully this growing area of interest. We are already planning for another event later in the year.

For next year we want to extend our equalities focus to disabled people and the Equalities Plan for 2006 includes membership targets as well as setting out a number of activities to improve diversity in this direction.

Publications

The newsletter has continued to be published regularly, and is widely seen as one of the key benefits of SSRG membership. Thanks are due to David Henderson, for his hard work as editor, no small part of which is to chase for contributions (not least for my 'messages from the chair'). We have continued to work hard to recover from the backlog of Research Policy and Planning editions, but have to report that we are still running two editions behind. The journal editors are working hard to make up this ground. However we have resolved the printing and distribution problems, which contributed to the delays originally, so we hope to be back on track by the end of the year.

Partnerships and Alliances

In the increasingly complex world of social work and social care, developing and maintaining good partnerships is vital, in order to broaden the areas covered and ensure that SSRG maintains and develops its programme of activities in ways that maximise the benefit for members.

We are continuing to work closely with ADSS, SCIE, REU, The Assembly and the Academy, and have developed joint approaches with the UK Federation of Primary Care Research Networks. SSRG has also continued its work with staff at DfES and DH, ensuring we are aware of and contribute to the latest policy developments. We have started to explore links with several organisations involved in children and family services, such as the British Education Research Association, the Local Education Authority Research Group and the Confederation of Education and Children Services Managers. Such links are essential in order to ensure that SSRG maintains its relevance for members whose main interest is in Children's services.

Relationships require work, and as such these initiatives continue to take up a large amount of time and resources. However, we feel that the benefits for members in terms of joint ventures and SSRG activities more generally makes this investment crucial, and will help to ensure that SSRG remains in an influential and informed position.

Future Activities

Continual planning takes place for the programme of events for the next eighteen months with provisional proposals for the venue and dates for our next annual workshop in Spring 2007, making approaches to SSRG members to help with our activities and a programme of events covering our broad objectives working jointly with the UK Federation, REU and SCIE.

Further work is still envisaged in supporting the implementation of The Research Governance Framework in Social Care, including development of the Social Care Research Register and administering of the Start-up Grant, both of which have had input from SSRG members.

And Firstly...

My first year as Chair of SSRG, has been a revelation, mainly of the rollercoaster chairing the EC meetings. I have enjoyed the first year, and have received great support from all EC members, especially David Allan as former chair, and Jenny Wilding/Chris Rainey as vice chairs, for which I have been very grateful.

Martin Stevens – March 2006.

Treasurer's Report - 2005

Summary of Accounts at 31st December 2005

At 31st December 2005 the financial position of SSRG was £37,545.25 (the accumulated funds), as compared with £29,463.87 in 2004.

Total income during the year was £72,634.01 as compared with £75,311.46 in 2004.

The total expenditure during the year was £64,552.63 as compared with £61,721.20 in 2004.

The accounts show an overall surplus of £8,081.38 as compared to the previous year's figure of £13,590.26.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2005

	£	<u>2004</u> £	£	<u>2005</u> £
<u>INCOME</u>				
Subscriptions	18,429.00		17,292.00	
Journal	760.44		995.00	
Conferences, Courses etc.	55,524.20		53,052.80	
Bank Interest	213.89		342.92	
Miscellaneous	383.93		951.29	
		75,311.46		72,634.01
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>				
Administration	16,591.32		12,743.38	
Subscriptions	238.50		35.00	
Working Parties	2,757.51		4,068.67	
EC	7,080.63		7,885.15	
Newsletter	6,208.65		6,756.41	
Journal	684.80		1,205.53	
Conferences, Courses etc.	27,682.29		31,128.08	
Audit Fee	200.00		200.00	
Miscellaneous	277.50		530.41	
		61,721.20		64,552.63
Surplus/(Loss) for Year		13,590.26		8,081.38

Commentary

1. To respond to questions raised at the AGM in 2005, regarding the increase in expenditure on administration in 2004 as opposed to 2003. The increase was due to the fact that we organised more events in 2004 and therefore had a much higher investment in administration to support the events (i.e. organising, booking administration, invoicing and chasing late payers etc).
2. We continue to have a healthy state of affairs in terms of our accumulated funds but as stated last year a proportion of these monies have already been identified and allocated to specific matters, for example:
 - £5,000 for outstanding printing costs for the Journal
 - £4,000 specific budget for publicity/marketing materials;£9,000 Total
3. There has been an increase in the expenditure on working groups in 2005 and this is a part of SSRG's strategy to proactively engage with key partner organisations to promote all aspects of research, evaluation, user involvement and performance monitoring.
4. SSRG's position in regard to VAT

In respect of SSRG's VAT situation, we have this year received a formal response from H M Customs and Excise. Following on from this we once more sought expert advice and have been informed that on the basis of the communication from HM Customs and Excise that SSRG are exempt from VAT.

Action

1. The EC will be seeking authorisation from the AGM to **maintain**:
 - **Membership fees at the current levels –**

(i.e.	1 st corporate membership	£59.00;
	2 nd /subsequent corporate membership	£44.00;
	personal	£54.00; plus
	student/unwaged no change	£35.00)
 - **Existing Subscription rate** for Research, Policy and Planning only (i.e. £45.00)
 - Current charging strategy for SSRG events for 2006/2007

Note

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

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

Secretary's Report

There are currently 17 people who make up the Executive Committee of SSRG. During 2005 EC members met every two months at the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) in London. The actual number of attendees at each meeting during 2005 was as follows:

	Number of Attendees
EC meeting, January 2005	15
EC meeting, March 2005	9
EC meeting, May 2005	13
EC meeting, July 2005	11
EC meeting, September 2005	14
EC meeting, November 2005	12

During 2005 there were several changes to the membership of the Executive Committee with three new members: Elena Murray, Rashid Jussa and Chris Russell. David Allan stepped down as Chair and Martin Stevens was elected in March 2005. There is still a vacancy on the EC for a member to lead on marketing and communications.

During 2005 the EC continued to contribute to important national priorities such as Research Governance and performance 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 in a different role subject to the election process.

Faye McNiven
Secretary
March 2006

SSRG Membership update Jan – Dec 2005

Membership update January 2005 – December 2005

At the start of 2005 there were 346 members and at the end of the year there were 389, an increase of 43 members over the year.

There were 206 organizations; seven more than at the start of the year and over three quarters of members were multiple members from within individual organisations.

Where members worked

Seventy percent of the members were from local authorities, a 10% increase on 2004.

Organisation	n
Council	242
Universities	33
Housing Organisation	20
Self employed	18
Voluntary Sector Organisation	11
Primary Care Trust	10
Central Govt	9
NHS Trust	4

Members come from across the country. The largest increase in regional membership was in London and the East Midlands.

Members in each region	
LONDON	68
WM	58
SCOTLAND	42
SE	41
NW	40
YH	35
SW	34
EM	32
EE	20
WALES	13
NE	6

The interests of members

The interests of members varied and were relatively evenly split between adults, older people and children's services.

Members interests	n
Children and Families	217
Older People	214
Mental Health	208
Adults Services	206
Learning Disabilities	206
Physical Disabilities	197
Sensory Loss	183
Child Protection	161
Care Leavers	154
Substance Abuse	148
Youth Justice	129

Other areas of interest included carers, complaints, corporate performance, equality and diversity, prevention, social inclusion, poverty, sexual health and HIV, developing housing options, research governance, user involvement and Supporting People initiatives.

What best described what members did

Research was the most frequently mentioned type of work, followed closely by performance assessment, policy and planning. Very few members indicated they were from professional practice.

What members do	n
Research/Evaluation	201
Performance Assessment/management	189
Policy and Planning	170
Strategic Management	93
Commissioning/Contracting	55
Teacher or Training	46
Professional Practice	22
Inspection	22
Student	2

Other areas that members worked in included partnership working, capacity building with the voluntary sector, consultancy, care standards reviews, information processing, knowledge management, libraries and user involvement.

Eighty seven percent of members were White British, 60% were female and 70% were between 35 and 54. Other ethnicities included Other White (n13), Indian (n5), Caribbean (n4), Irish (n3), White Asian (n3), African (n2), White and Black Caribbean (n1), Other Asian (n1), Chinese (n1), two other ethnic, and two were not stated. 104 people did not indicate their ethnicity. Seven people said they were disabled.

Recruiting new members

Events have been the most successful way of signing up new members and this needs to be sustained. The absence of a dedicated marketing position on the EC has most likely meant a loss in opportunities to attract and recruit new members. It is hoped that a marketing lead will be in place on the EC by mid 2006.

The focus for attracting new members in 2006-07 will continue to be across all sectors but will also be focused on new members from Children's Trusts and PCT's.

The database of members and the website

The membership database now includes information about non-members who attend events as well as paid up members. The majority of members details are available on the website, excluding those members who wish their details to be confidential.

Membership fees

The AGM has not agreed an increase in fees for members since 2004. They have remained at:

- Main member £59
- Additional members £44
- Personal membership £54
- Students/unwaged members £35

Member survey (2005)

A membership survey was undertaken during September-November 2005. The key issues are being discussed by the EC and it is planned that this will be an annual event that will feed into the planning day to be held the autumn.

Our thanks go once again to Jackie Watson, our co-ordinator, who skilfully maintains the membership database and deals with many queries from members. Thanks also to Jez MacDonald from SCIE for his ongoing and often unnoticed work to develop the membership section of the website.

Margaret Cooney
Membership Secretary
February, 2006

Equalities

The EC has continued to take action to address issues related to equalities.

The SSRG has increased the diversity of its membership. By September 2005:

- 6.9% of SSRG members are of black and minority ethnic origin. This is an increase from 14 people in 2004 to 19 people in 2005 (an increase from 6.2% to 6.9% of the membership that provided information on their ethnic origin).
- 1.7% of members have a disability (7 out of 379 members). This is an increase of 4 since 2003.
- 60% of members are female (227 out of 379 members).

The EC has recognised that more action is needed to target under represented groups as part of our membership strategy. As a result the following activities have taken place:

- During 2005, the number of people of black and minority ethnic origin on the EC was increased.
- In November 2005, a second highly successful 'Inclusion and Exclusion' conference was jointly organised with the REU with support from grants from SCIE and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The conference in London focussed on Racism and Ethnicity in Research, Policy and Practice. This included addressing issues related to women and disabled people in black and minority ethnic communities. About 100 delegates attended the conference. They came from a wide range of organisations including local voluntary organisations and community groups, local authorities, national agencies and universities. By continuing to organise these events SSRG makes a positive contribution to the dissemination of research findings around race equality and the promotion of policies that are guided by sound research. Follow up activity is planned for 2006, based on issues raised at the conference.
- The SSRG Annual Workshop 2005 featured a number of workshops that addressed equalities issues. There also appeared to be a greater ethnic mix of delegates at the 2005 Annual Workshop than in previous years.

- SSRG takes a number of measures to ensure that its events are accessible to everyone. These include:
 - A limited number of subsidised places at events for users and carers assisted by Social Services.
 - Personal assistants of delegates may attend events free of charge.
 - Childcare facilities are made available at events when requested.
- The EC has recognised the need to take more action in relation to disability issues. These include: accessibility of events, accessibility of the website and representation of people with a disability on the EC.
- The newsletter continues to include articles related to various equalities issues.

In 2006, the SSRG plan to run a further one day event in partnership with the REU addressing issues related to race and ethnicity in research.

Elijah Collins, Patricia Walker and Jenny Wilding
March 2006

SSRG Newsletter

Newsletter Editor

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

Six copies of the Newsletter were published during the year ending 31st December 2005 and regular contributions were received from EC and other colleagues who represent SSRG on groups such as the ADSS Information Management Group (IMG), ADSS Research Group, the DH Technical Working Group (TWG) and the Children's Working Group.

Production of the Newsletter is now a truly International affair. Material is collated in Shropshire and then sent to Canada, where it is 'set up' on an Apple Mac before being sent to Belfast for printing and distribution.

Contributions to the Newsletter and ideas for improvement are always welcome.

I would like to thank Jenny Edwards, who last year moved from Shropshire to Stonemills near Ontario for her work in setting up the Newsletter, and to Dataplus in Belfast for printing and distribution.

David Henderson
Newsletter Editor March 2006

Annual Workshop and other Events

SSRG Annual Workshop 2005: "Social Care in Transition: Partnerships, Practice and Performance"

Monday 11th Tuesday 12th and Wednesday 13th April and was held in the Palmer Building at the University of Reading.

SSRG is grateful to SCIE, Dataplus and the Guardian for supporting the Annual Workshop.
Organiser: David Henderson

Improving Services for Children: The Impact of Inspection and Performance Indicators
Monday 13th June 2005 Old Viewforth, Stirling

This was the third in a series of seminars that aimed to address key issues in relation to improving services and outcomes for vulnerable children. It looked at the ways that services can be improved by the use of different methods of evaluation, such as performance indicators and inspections
Organiser: David Henderson

Children's Services Plans: Progress and Good Practice
Wednesday 28th September 2005, COSLA Conference Centre,

This event looked at the Scottish Executive's priorities for integrated children's services planning, including integrated assessment and information sharing, quality improvement, joint inspections and how councils have prepared and implemented their ICSPs on a multi-agency basis.
Organiser: David Henderson

The Adult Green Paper: Information and Performance Management
Tuesday 11th October, 2005
Gilbert Murray Conference Centre, University of Leicester

This event addressed the implications for short and long-term information collection and performance management emerging from the adult green paper 'Independence, Well-being and Choice'
Organiser: David Henderson

Inclusion and Exclusion Conference: 2005
Wednesday 9th November 2005
London Voluntary Sector Resource Centre, London

SSRG and REU organised the second successful joint conference on racism and ethnicity: although Government policy sets out to challenge discrimination and promote diversity, the evidence suggests that progress has been patchy.

SSRG and REU are grateful to SCIE and JRF for their support
Organisers: Jabeer Butt, Elijah Collins, Chris Russell, Jenny Wilding and Patricia Walker

David Henderson
Newsletter Editor
March 2006

Research Policy and Planning

Addendum to come.

Statement of conduct regarding commissioning activity

During the last twelve months SSRG has been involved with the Department of Health in commissioning services connected with Research Governance. This has raised a number of issues about how we collectively and individually conduct ourselves as commissioners and, at times, providers of services where SSRG is formally involved. We have produced a statement of conduct document that spells out key general principles and responsibilities that support detailed protocols and processes for commissioning. The draft statement of conduct document was agreed by the Executive Committee on 10th January 2006 and will be considered at the SSRG AGM in March 2006.

David Allan

Partnerships

1. Department of Health

➤ Department of Health and Department for Education and Skills – Technical Working Group.

In my report for 2004/05, I noted both the extent of change on the horizon and the continuing degree of uncertainty that surrounded issues like the creation of an independent data collection and processing agency. In the intervening period some issues have been resolved – most noticeably the creation of the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) – whilst new ones have emerged. As for the change agenda, this seems to reflect the generally frenetic pace of change that the whole of the public sector faces.

The Technical Working Group has met 3 times since my last report and is due to meet again in March. Agenda's, as always, have been very full and I highlight below some of the more significant issues that have arisen.

- A fundamental review of adult social care information returns has commenced under the stewardship of Roger Staton from the HSCIC. This three-year project ranges from establishing “quick fixes” that can be implemented immediately through to a root and branch examination of what information is really needed at a national level. It goes without saying that the main driver here will be the recent White Paper on out of hospital care and prior to that the Green Paper on adult social care. Roger continues to keep TWG well informed.
- TWG has considered a wide range of new proposals and changes to existing returns but two are worth a specific mention.
 - Compliance costs: each year DH/DfES have to report to ministers on the cost to local authorities of complying with central government returns. DH agreed to survey local authorities on a range of adult social care returns and the results were discussed by TWG at our June meeting. Hitherto, an annual figure of around £1m had been

submitted whereas the survey results suggested a figure of £6.6m. DfES estimated that the compliance costs for children's returns were in the £6-6.5m range. TWG agreed that these costs appeared much more realistic.

- Supporting people at home: Many people will be only too well aware of the problems in getting decent measures of how well local authorities support vulnerable people in their own homes. Current PAF indicators are derived from RAP and focus quite narrowly on people with care-managed services, which misses the vast contribution made by voluntary organisations. A group of around 20 authorities helped DH pilot a proposed new return, which involved assessing the contribution local voluntary organisations, were making. The results of this pilot are being written up and will be considered by TWG in March. Although far too early to be absolutely sure, I think that we will see a new national return sooner rather than later.
- As in previous years, members of TWG were invited to join colleagues from CSCI to examine the bandings for PAF indicators. The meeting was held in December and a healthy exchange of views took place. Whilst the outcome of the deliberations was not all to the liking of local authorities, the fact that we are able to influence this important agenda needs to be preserved and developed.
- Last year I noted that the Association of Directors of Social Services was beginning to take a more active interest in the work of TWG and how it related to other processes such as the development of performance indicators. Progress has not been as fast as we wanted but we continue to move in the right direction. We now have TWG representation on the CSCI PAF review group and recently all Directors of Social Services (a vanishing breed?) were asked to confirm nominations to groups such as TWG and also to put forward nominations for this and related groups. TWG have also been invited to send representatives to the ADSS Standards and Performance Committee which progress indeed
- On a final note, TWG is getting to grips with the increasing separation between the adults and children's agenda's. TWG will split at some point into two separate bodies and at this stage it is unclear whether the two support groups – Adult Review Group and Children's Working Group – will continue in their present format. I will let you know next year!

All papers relating to the work of the TWG can be accessed at:

<http://www.ic.nhs.uk/TWG/>

Terry Davies
tdavies@worcestershire.gov.uk

01905 766912

➤ **SSRG involvement in Research Governance (RGF)**

Back in 2002, the Department of Health carried out a consultation to see how the (then) recently published *Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care* could best be implemented within the social care field. SSRG, whilst

broadly welcoming the new arrangements for regulating research, identified six specific areas of concern: resources; scope; ethical and scientific review; information; responsibilities; and compliance.

Since then, through the involvement of a number of members and EC representatives on the DH Research Governance (Social Care) Advisory Group, SSRG has played a strong and significant role in supporting the implementation of RGF in local authorities. Concerns about the six areas identified above continue, and new areas of concern have emerged, most notably the split between adult and children's services. We recognise that the RGF is mandatory where there is a duty of care under the Secretary of State for Health, yet we remain committed to promoting high quality social care research across adult and children's services.

Last year's Annual Report set out the achievements so far, including the publication in April 2005 of the *RGF Resource Pack*, produced by SSRG on behalf of the DH, and the national series of RGF Training Workshops, hosted by SSRG in Spring 2005.

The Department of Health has set aside £500k to support local authorities in England over two years (2005-6, 2006-7). SSRG continues to argue that this is insufficient to enable local authorities to develop the level of research capacity needed to ensure the successful implementation of RGF systems, let alone the successful development of evidence based policy and practice.

During 2005, the Advisory Group has focussed on the following initiatives, with varying degrees of success:

- Start-up Grants
- Training
- Social Care Research Register
- Website
- Ethics Review
- Baseline Assessment Exercise

Start-up Grants

Each Council with Social Services Responsibilities (CSSR) can apply for a grant of £2,500 to help develop research governance. If RGF is being implemented corporately, the amount is increased to £3,500. If an alliance of two or more councils is applying, the amount is enhanced by an additional 10%. These rules are different from those set out in the *RGF Resource Pack* (April 2005): they were changed following feedback from some local authority RGF leads. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, there is an embargo on spending in the DH and all RGF monies are frozen until further notice. However, applications for the start-up grant are being processed in readiness for the Great Thaw. Importantly, we have lobbied successfully for grants to be conditional on shared products and outputs: in other words, all materials such as training manuals and information packs produced with grant funding will be available to others. This, we hope, will help a little go a bit further.

Training

Participants at last year's training workshops, in which two thirds of all local authorities took part, expressed a clear interest in follow-up events. Meanwhile,

many other local authorities have started to develop RGF. The DH has agreed to fund a series of regional follow-up workshops and some events for those new to RGF. The aim will be to get together to hear the latest news, share experiences and ideas and plan next steps. The 2006 workshops will also give the chance for informal groups and formal RGF alliances to exchange ideas. (NB: At the time of writing, funding for training is frozen)

Social Care Research Register

This national resource is being developed by SCIE and is awaiting DH funding to complete (currently frozen). The register, which will be freely accessible via the SCIE website, will capture ongoing and completed research, which has been approved by the research governance process. Fields for data entry have been agreed and the model is being tested by a number of local authority RGF leads.

Website

Many local authority RGF leads have expressed an interest in a national website dealing with RGF issues, yet there appear to be difficulties in setting up a DH based website for research governance in social care. Some SSRG members have lobbied for such a website and earlier this year we considered a proposal for a separate website set up by SSRG and funded by the DH. We are still disentangling the complexities of who might design, host and manage such a website; how much it will cost; and where the responsibility lies for putting it in place. Against this, we do recognise the urgency of the situation: people want to know where to go to get information and share good practice around RGF in social care.

Ethics Review

The long-awaited outcome of the consultation on social care ethics review, held last year, remains elusive. The issue has been complicated by the O'Higgins report on the review of *NHS ethics committees* and the ESRC proposal earlier this year for a national system of *social science ethics review* committees. It seems as though there is a tug-of-war, pulling social care research between the health camp and the social science camp. Meanwhile, the social care research community came up with some clearly preferred options of its own in 2005 (reported by Professor Jan Pahl). To avoid these views being sidelined, SSRG will continue to voice its support for a system that meets the needs of its members. In turn, members will be called on to respond to the current 'consultation' being carried out by the NPSA (National Patient Safety Agency, the new home of COREC).

Baseline Assessment Exercise

The follow-up to the original baseline exercise (2002) was carried out in the summer of 2005 by Professor Jan Pahl and Jane Dennett (University of Kent). The response rate was 64% (94 councils) and the survey demonstrates considerable progress in implementing RGF across the country. Half of those responding (54%) have a system to ensure that all staff are aware of RGF. Half (49%) record all research centrally. More than a third (39%) have a system in place for independent ethics review of external research; similar numbers (36%) ensure the independent review of research methods.

Research Governance in Wales and Scotland

SSRG members in Scotland and Wales have their own perspective on RGF, since RGF comes under the area of devolved activities and, therefore, implementation follows a different timeframe. SSRG's support for members in

Wales took the form of a training workshop held in Cwmbran in March as part of the regional series of RGF workshops. In December, RGF was the topic for a seminar held in Edinburgh by SSRG Scotland, in conjunction with its AGM.

Chris Russell (chris@barn.abelgratis.co.uk)

Chris Rainey (chris.rainey@westsussex.gov.uk)

2. Children's Working Group

The CWG is a sub-group of the Technical Working group and is a forum for Local Authority and DfES reps & invited guests to discuss proposed changes to the social care statutory statistical collections. These collections feed the Performance Assessment Framework and supply the Performance Indicators that contribute to the star ratings of every Local Authority provider of Personal Social Services.

Over the last year the following areas have been discussed;

- Changes to the 903 Stat return - OC3 ceased and 'in touch' codes
- OC2 Stat return - the introduction of Substance misuse questions for the year to 30th September 06
- Changes to the PF1 collection
- The possibility of the DfES providing educational data (including attainment data) to LA's for the OC2 return. (perhaps from Sept 2007)
- Introduction of annual Foster Carer Survey (not planned before 2007) (comments/ feedback welcome)
- DH mapping survey to be expanded to include Social Care (financial data – at service type level). Pilot over the summer with a view to introducing in November
- The Common Assessment Framework and the phasing out of Child Protection Registers – now scheduled for April 2008
- Form 4 no longer collected - data collected on Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) and SEN2 returns
- The replacement of the CiN census – DfES keen to have LA comments
- New Gateway process for approving requests for information from Children's Trusts/ Local Authorities Children's Services – under discussion to combine current Education process (RIG) with CWG process
- PAF D35 definition likely to be changed to match PSA definition, currently SS (LAC) 24 on the APA
- ADSS 'approval' of representation on the CWG

The DfES are always keen to hear the views of Local Authorities and SSRG members and colleagues are welcome to feed back comments, requests, views through me or directly to the DfES reps.

Rashid Jussa
March 2006

3. ADSS

➤ Information Management Group (IMG)

For 2005-6 the Department of Health and the Department for Education and Skills had both agreed to support the work of the ADSS-IMG. This reflects the changes that have been taking place in social care, with the increasing formal separation of adult and children's services. In response to these same changes the IMG agendas are now grouped around adult's services; children's services; and generic issues that impact on all of social care. The meetings always conclude with an item on local strategic issues. This allows for report backs from local IMG groups, reports on activity and developments in Wales and Scotland and reports from other groups represented at IMG meetings such as SSRG.

One of the main items on the adult's part of the agendas has been the adult social care information development (ASCID) review. This started following the establishment of the Health and Social Care Information Centre in April. IMG has received regular updates on the development of the review from Roger Staton. A pilot data collection project has been carried out with 20 local authorities. All the adult social care related central collections identified so far were listed in a matrix, which was circulated with the December agenda. Developments around SAP have also been discussed.

Similarly the involvement of the DfES has meant there are regular reports on developments in the children's agenda. Notably this year this has meant being updated on the proposals and thinking around the Information Sharing (IS) project. Updates at the December meeting indicated that the IS project will be implemented in parts with a completion date of 2008. The first part will focus on collecting and managing information, the second on access by practitioners. Questions on standards and how to edit items on the Index will be handled during 2006. There have also been reports on the progress of the common assessment framework.

Generic topics have included developments in the electronic social care record (ESCR) and in standards and the work of the Care Records Development Board (CRDB). There have also been regular updates on the progress of the national IT programme for the NHS and discussions on the implications for social care.

IMG has a formal work plan, which is reviewed, at intervals. At the December meeting there was also a review of the terms of reference of the group. These papers and all those presented at the meetings plus the minutes are available on the IMG website www.adss-img.org.uk.

Patricia Walker
March 2006

➤ **Standards and Performance Committee**

Terms of Reference

The Committee’s areas of interest include:

- Quality and standards
- Regulation and inspection
- Performance assessment framework
- National Information Policy for Social Care and its integration with NHS Information Policy with a particular focus on SAP, ESCR, ISA, ICS, etc.

In addition to the main committee, two sub groups undertake detailed work on relevant areas:

- Information Management Group, and
- Research Group

Activities

The main Committee met 3 times during 2005.

A brief summary of the Committee’s continuing work programme includes:

POLICY THEME	WORK PROGRAMME
1. Quality and Standards	1.1 Contribute to development of evidence based standards of quality and performance. 1.2 Identify and promote examples of good practice. 1.3 Promote the development of learning networks and learning organisations
2. Regulation and Inspection	2.1 Contribute to the development of policies and strategies in respect of: - Performance Assessment - Regulation and Inspection 2.2 Promote good practice in the development and use of management information. 2.3 To give policy support to Technical Working Group
3. Implementation of Social Care Information Strategy	3.1 Provide policy lead for DH Strategic Plan, Information for Social Care. 3.2 Provide policy lead for Electronic Social Care Record 3.3 Joint policy led with Older People’s Committee on implementation of Single Assessment Process 3.4 Joint policy lead with Children and Families Committee on implementation of Information Sharing and Assessment and Integrated Children’s System. 3.5 Providing policy lead for social care link with NHS National Programme for IT.

As a representative on the Standards and Performance Committee I was also nominated to sit on a Performance Co-ordinating Group, comprising of: CSCI; DH; DfES and LGA, and this group has met 6 times during 2005.

Commentary.

1. Much work has been done this year to continue and develop the links with CSCI on inspection and performance issues including:
 - performance assessment mechanisms [JAR, APA, DIS etc]
 - key thresholds
 - performance indicators and performance indicator bandings, and

- the associated input to performance indicator developments in both children's and adult services and the associated technical working groups etc
- And continuing to maintain links with the DH and DfES in respect of data collections, performance indicator development and associated performance measurement.

In this area work has been undertaken with CSCI and government departments over the past year to review the membership of the different advisory groups for the Performance Monitoring Systems. It was agreed that Local Authority representatives should be endorsed by ADSS and would also have a reporting line from the different Performance Indicator Working Groups back to the ADSS Committee structure. This review of membership and tighter system of reporting and accountability has been established during the course of the year.

2. Discussion within ADSS indicated an increase in dissatisfaction for a number of authorities in the way in which star rating judgements had been reached. ADSS was also concerned about the introduction of the concept of "coasting" authorities.

There has also been interesting work carried out within some ADSS branches to examine the validity and usefulness of some of the national Performance Indicators.

Combining the two issues ADSS decided it should undertake a more proactive role in proposing changes in devolution of the National Performance Assessment Framework and it was agreed, therefore, to establish a group to undertake this work. The Standards and Performance Committee is in the process of establishing a group to lead on this. It will undertake its work in the context of the national review of performance monitoring and regulation, which is intended to result in a "lighter burden" for public bodies.

3. The Committee has also been involved in responding to a number of consultation documents and also in planning the development of Electronic Performance Standards and Performance Indicators relating to Adult Services.

➤ **ADSS Research sub-committee**

The ADSS Research Sub Committee is a multi interest group of academics, local authority staff, and independent researchers. The sub committee reports to the ADSS Standards and Performance Committee and covers those research activities where ADSS may have an interest, including user surveys, research governance, performance indicators and data collection exercises, and applications for agreement to undertake research in social services settings. I only attended one meeting in January 2006 since I had not yet been included in the distribution list. All of the above topics were covered and minutes of the meetings can be seen on the ADSS website.

David Allan
March 2006

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

Addendum to come.

5. Partnership with UK Federation of Primary Care Research Organisations

SSRG has been committed to developing alliances with research minded colleagues in the health community. To this end we approached the UK Federation of Primary Care Research Organisations to explore shared approaches to research development activities. There have previously been an SSRG presentation at the Federation's Annual Conference in 2003, and the Federation Chair spoke at the SSRG Conference in 2004.

Meetings to develop links further between SSRG and the Federation started in late 2004 and a project group was established in May 2005. A joint programme of activities was agreed that included;

- Sharing of newsletters and articles,
- Attendance and contributions at each other's annual event and other regional and national events,
- Considering representation at each other executive committees,
- Jointly backing a national conference on integrated health and social care research.
- Links to each other's websites

Progress on these items has been made in the following ways:

Joint national conference

A Steering Group has been set up with the programme intended to run over a two years period. The first year for practitioner researchers and the second year aimed at policy makers concerned with progressing integrated health and social care research. Initial plans for a first conference in July 2006 have been postponed due to structural changes taking place in health which could reduce the number of primary care delegates The event may run in 2007 and a further announcement will be made later in the year. .

Mick Bond and David Allan have represented SSRG on the group, with David Henderson playing a major role in trying to organise the event for this year. Shona Haining, Rose Streeton, followed by Denys Hancock and Anthonia James represented the UK Federation.

Sharing newsletters

Copies of the SSRG newsletter have been distributed to Federation member organisations with an invitation to receive further copies on request. The Federation will reciprocate with copies to the SSRG Executive Committee once contact details have been made available.

Attendance at events

Mick Bond attended the last UK Federation workshop and took along information to distribute to attendees. Rose Streeton represented the Federation at the last SSRG Annual Conference. Shona Haining and Anthonia James from the Federation will be attending the SSRG annual workshop this year.

Mick Bond
March 2006

6. SCIE

Our relationship with SCIE continues to be extremely valuable. When the three-year 'Framework of cooperation' agreement with SCIE was reviewed in December 05, it was agreed that SCIE will continue supporting SSRG in a number of areas:

- 1) **Venue of meetings:** The use of SCIE's meeting room has been secured for 2006. This arrangement will be reviewed each June, for the following year, in order to give time for SSRG to find an alternative if necessary.
- 2) **Research Policy and Planning (RPP):** RPP, SSRG's academic journal, was given prominence on 'Caredata', the forerunner to 'Social Care Online', SCIE's database for literature on social care issues. While RPP continues to be abstracted in Social Care Online, so that searches on the database will identify articles in the journal, there is now no specific mention of the journal anywhere on the SCIE website. Discussions are talking place about whether SCIE can promote RPP on the SCIE website.
- 3) **Website:** SCIE hosts the SSRG website and provides technical support, including administering the web feedback section. It has been agreed that the RPP pages on the SSRG website will be developed to reflect information about submissions and provide some general information about the journal and possibly a search facility.
- 4) **Attendance at EC meetings:** SCIE's representative on the Executive Committee, Diane Gwynne-Smith, will attend meetings in May and November, to update on SCIE issues. She will attend other meetings as and when this is appropriate.
- 5) **Events:** SCIE sponsored the second SSRG/REU event that took place in November 2005 and have indicated their willingness to sponsor a third event in this series.

At the review, a speculative conversation took place about the following ideas for joint SSRG/SCIE activities for promoting research and working with the Performance Agenda:

- a) Analysis of local authority social care research workforce, capacity and role
- b) Joint statements in terms of the Department of Health Social Care Research strategy initiative
- c) Joint approach to the role of improvement agenda/performance assessment etc.
- d) Events: user involvement in Research Governance or Evidence-Informed-Practice

While the agreement will be informally reviewed each year, the next full review will take place in 2008.

Martin Stevens
April 2006

NB A table summarising SSRG partnerships and alliances can be found in **Appendix 2**.

7. REU

We have continued our work with REU. The most visible result of this is the 'Inclusion and Exclusion' conference. Members of the REU have also contributed to the newsletter, RPP and the Annual Workshop. This is a fruitful partnership, which we plan to continue by developing the Inclusion and Exclusion events.

Jenny Wilding, Elijah Collins, Patricia Walker

March 2006

Appendix 1

SSRG Draft Action Plan 2006-7

Policy Statement	Activity to progress	Details	Resp.
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. 	The Academy; The Assembly; ADSS; Department of Health; Health Networks, REU.SCIE British Education Research Association	Named EC Members **
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver a programme of workshops and events of interest to the research community 	One-Day conferences planned: 'Outcomes'; Joint UKFed/Equalities (with REU); Plus Annual Workshop	Events Coord; EC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influence the modernising agenda nationally by being party to new research and management information development 	Participation with SCIE, Research Governance & PAF developments; Responding to consultations	Named EC members **
We expand the community of interest in research, information, planning and evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase our membership and support to members. 	Increased total membership.	EC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop new alliances with social care and health research organisations. 	JUC/SWEC, Local Authority Research Group;	Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress our Marketing and Communications Strategy. 	Detailed action points in the strategy to be achieved	EC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement our Equal Opportunities Action Plan 	Detailed action points in the Action Plan to be achieved.	EC
We increase and improve the profile of the SSRG network nationally, regionally and locally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the active contributions of members. 	Use initiatives to draw on members' expertise.	EC
		Assist regions to progress their programmes	EC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve communications with members through expanding the website and e-mail facilities, and increasing the co-ordination of administrative activities. 	Web site developments	Chair
		Administrative improvements	PTC* Chair EC
		RPP	Chair; RPP Edit. Board RPP eds
		Newsletter	N/L Ed. EC
	Develop marketing strategy	Chair; EC	

*PTC = Part-Time Coordinator ** See Alliance and relevant sections of Annual report for details.

Appendix 2

SSRG PARTNERSHIPS AND ALLIANCES

Name of the Organisation or Committee	Date when SSRG became involved	Reason for SSRG involvement: Aims and Objectives or benefits to SSRG	Nature of the alliance	Frequency and type of involvement with the organisation/committee.	Reporting and communication arrangements to SSRG of partnership / alliance activities	Last date SSRG EC reviewed alliance / Other comments
ADSS Standards and Performance Committee SSRG contact person: Alan Bunting, SSRG Treasurer	July 2004	Shared interests in promoting improved performance management agenda, influencing policy, standards, guidance, annual PAF processes and performance monitoring in general for CSSR's	Partnership, SSRG invited representative on the Committee	Main Committee - 3 meetings per year, plus sub-group meetings as required	Via EC and Newsletter reports	2004
The Assembly. SSRG contact person: Colin Kelsey. [pudkelsey@yahoo.co.uk]	2000/2001.	SSRG as one of the founder members of this virtual organisation and is one of the 10 current bodies signed up to the Assembly's aims after the June 2004 Forum. Benefits from association with the Assembly include access to a wider person and activity base thereby fulfilling some intentions within the Business Plan.	SSRG forms part of the umbrella network which the Assembly seeks to draw together. SSRG holds a strong relationship with SCIE and a developing role with the non-statutory sector independent grouping represented by the Assembly.	The Assembly meets around 3 or 4 times a year inviting a representative from each of its constituent bodies in the network on each occasion.	The Assembly is frequently an agenda item at EC. Otherwise its development will be discussed at the Away Day as an activity in the business plan.	At the June 2004 Forum the need for creating the Assembly was debated, after which constituent bodies were asked to decide within their own groupings as to its existence. The decision was for overwhelming support including from SSRG. The need appears to have increased since.

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BASW. SSRG contact person: Colin Kelsey pudkelsey@yahoo.co.uk	2004/5	BASW has certain common interests with those of SSRG especially in furthering the futures of social Care, education and research in the present change environment. It may be possible to do some joint work, perhaps starting with a conference or workshop. This will be explored during 2005.		No regular contact/meeting envisaged at present. There is informal regular contact at Assembly venues.	Evaluation of alliances occurs at the SSRG autumn Away Day. Any specific issues will be brought to EC.	BASW has only reached a possible position of being in partnership with SSRG in 2004 and this will be examined in 2005.
Race Equality Unit SSRG contact person/s: Jenny Wilding Patricia Walker Elijah Collins	Long standing relationship	Promoting work on equal opportunities issues. Raising SSRG profile re BME issues. Organising joint work on equal opportunities issues, e.g. jointly organised 'Inclusion and Exclusion' conferences in May 2004 and November 2005.	Partnership for joint working / information exchange.	Not on any of their committees. Contact as required.	Report back to SSRG EC meetings.	Discuss at 2005 EC Awayday.

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<p>UK Federation of Primary Care Research Organisations</p> <p>SSRG contact person: Mick Bond, North Derbyshire Public Health Network 01246-514266 mick.bond@chestfieldpct.nhs.uk</p>	Summer 2004	Aim to develop closer working links between the two bodies particularly on the research interface between health and social care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Links on websites, work still to complete ▪ Information in newsletters on a regular basis ▪ Representation /presence at annual workshops ▪ Organisation of a joint research event in May/June 2007 		Mick Bond and David Allan will report back on joint meetings held to EC on a regular basis.	Propose the arrangement is reviewed in July 2007 when details of the postponed joint event will be clearer (Was due to take place in July 2006)
<p>Research Governance implementation in social care External Consultative Group</p> <p>SSRG contact person: Chris Russell chris@barn.abelgatis.co.uk Chris Rainey Chris.Rainey@westsussex.gov.uk</p>	2002	<p>Aim to support and influence the implementation of Research Governance in Social Care.</p> <p>This is an area of particular interest and relevance to SSRG members almost all of whom will be affected, either as those responsible for implementing RG, or through having to negotiate the new procedures.</p>	SSRG has had several members on the group and been involved in several discrete projects: the RG- Resource pack, RG Training workshops and RG Baseline assessment exercise.	Ad-hoc meetings, (between 3 and 6 a year).	Regular updates to EC.	<p>Not reviewed.</p> <p>Comments: This is perhaps a limited alliance as the group itself may not continue indefinitely. However there is probably an ongoing role for SSRG in Research Governance.</p>

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<p>ADSS Research sub-committee</p> <p>SSRG contact person: David Allan</p>	Not known	To ensure SSRG perspective informs discussion and SSRG views can be represented	SSRG have been invited to join the ADSS sub committee to ensure that where appropriate joint approaches are being taken on issues.	Three monthly	Regular reports to SSRG Executive and to SSRG membership in the annual report	In the light of ADSS changing with an adults and children's split it will be timely to review the future of the committee and SSRG's involvement over the next 12 months.
<p>ADSS Information Management Group (IMG)</p> <p>SSRG contact person: Patricia Walker patricia.walker@haringey.gov.uk</p>	Not sure	ADSS IMG invited SSRG to send a representative to the meetings. The benefit for SSRG is keeping in touch with developments in the information management agenda in the DfES, DoH and the NHS national programme for IT (NPfIT). It also gives SSRG a voice at the national level in this area of work and an opportunity to publicise the work of SSRG in relation to the information management agenda.	Representative.	Attendance at the quarterly ADSS IMG meetings.	Report back to Executive Committee meetings, articles for SSRG newsletter.	Will need to keep developments in social care, and their impact on organisations such as ADSS, under review following the separation of children and adult services.

Name of the Organisation or Committee	Date when SSRG became involved	Reason for SSRG involvement: Aims and Objectives or benefits to SSRG	Nature of the alliance	Frequency and type of involvement with the organisation/committee.	Reporting and communication arrangements to SSRG of partnership / alliance activities	Last date SSRG EC reviewed alliance / Other comments
SCIE SSRG contact person: SSRG Chair David Allan	2002	A mutually beneficial partnership was formed that covered the following points: 1. SCIE would host and help to further develop SSRG's website. 2. SCIE's Knowledge Management Strategy includes a "research into practice" approach with SSRG assisting in this. 3. SCIE holds the electronic versions of RPP. 4. SSRG and SCIE are collaborating on a number of initiatives to further research into practice e.g. joint sponsors of a national conference concerned with research issues in the BME community.	Formal partnership agreement.	Regular reviews and updates of partnership agreement and a co-opted member from SCIE on the SSRG Executive Committee.	Regular reports to EC meetings from co-opted member.	Partnership agreement reviewed within last 12 months.
Social Care Institute for Excellence	2002 (first 'framework of co-operation agreement')	The aims of SSRG and SCIE overlap in that both organisations wish to promote the place of research and other evidence in developing social work and social care policy and practice.	SCIE supports SSRG in a number of areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosts and gives support for the SSRG website • Provides a venue for SSRG EC meetings • Sponsored two SSRG/REU events and sponsors the Annual Workshop • Promotes RPP on the SCIE website 	SCIE has a Representative on the SSRG EC	SCIE rep attends twice yearly SSRG EC meetings	2005 (next review 2008)