
Editorial

Mary Nash and Kieran O'Donoghue

We begin by acknowledging the work of the previous editors, Gavin Rennie and Ksenija Napan, of the School of Health and Community Studies at Unitec, and also that of Kate van Heughten our book review editor, School of Social Work and Human Services, University of Canterbury. They have all three been great editors, and leave us a high standard to aspire to. The book review section in this issue is Kate's final review.

As editors, we are guided by our readers' interests, by our contributors' enthusiasm and by the Association's policies. We are encouraged to showcase practice-based articles informed by practice wisdom, experience and research. We are looking forward to working with potential authors where they have something to say but would like to have some mentoring and support in written expression. Mary Nash and Kieran O'Donoghue are the new Journal editors and Helen Simmons is the new book review editor.

We open this issue with a clinical article in which Marie Connolly and Richard Woollons present an interesting example of very specialised clinical work using an approach that provides a useful assessment tool. They note the increase in recent years of research that compares the characteristics of offender groups, and in particular the characteristics of men who have sexually offended against children and men who rape adult women. For social workers involved in this area of work, this article will provide further valuable resources indicating that certain patterns of experience may influence offending pathways. It is argued that a better understanding of this promotes more effective interventions.

We are delighted to find synergies between several of the articles included in this issue. We believe that readers will agree that the themes of leadership and supervision fit well together here. It is interesting to observe that these are issues that readers and practitioners as well as academics are currently exploring and developing in social work. At a time when the practice of social work is challenging because of heightened expectations of excellence, scarce resources and the potential for hostile publicity when things go less well than they should, we see these emerging themes of leadership and supervision as a potential response to the need for a secure base from which social workers can practise and for which they feel the need. This important aspect of supervision is discussed by Sue Hannah in her article 'Not so strange! An application of attachment theory and feminist psychology to social work supervision'. The gendered lens provides additional interest as the article examines the emotional minefield that can be supervision and argues that attachment theory and insights from feminist psychologists will better enable existing supervisory practices to respond more effectively and creatively to the needs of women supervisees in child protection social work practice

Michael Dale and Andrew Trlin have examined the perceptions and experiences of probation officers and service managers, drawing on doctoral research carried out by Dale. While they discuss the contribution of leadership to the achievement of effective service delivery in the Probation Service, the findings have application to any service delivery organisation. The participants in the research asserted that effective leadership rests upon the quality of

the relationship that exists between leader and follower. Dale and Trlin note how positive experiences of leadership reflected an emphasis upon reciprocity and trust; and the probation officers provided a consistent message that effective leadership has a focus on practice and the provision of professional support.

Peter Matthewson continues with the theme of management and supervision, in his examination of the role of clinical social work specialist in a mental health division of a district health board. He begins by noting the rapidly changing context in health settings for management and supervision in social work practice and observes the emergence of new roles which can be broadly identified as professional leadership, as distinct from management. In examining the position of clinical social work specialist in the mental health division, Matthewson reflects on the opportunities provided to preserve the special character of social work and to mediate between management and social work for the maintenance of social work morale and professional standards.

So with three articles emphasising the importance of leadership and good supervision in enabling practitioners to function with confidence, what can social workers learn about good staff management? Michael Webster and Hanuere Jann Tofi's article proposes postgraduate management education uniquely tailored for social work. They argue that the values and practice standards of the social work profession, including our bicultural perspective, offer the foundation for a distinctive framework in which the profession could determine its own management theory and practice rather than 'importing' external models.

We have included two articles in the Practice Section of the Journal, and we hope to have more in our next issue. We encourage these articles as they provide valuable ideas for practice on which readers can build their own innovations.

Ellice Rains has written about 'interdisciplinary supervisor development in a community health service'. She notes how the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 defines supervision as the 'means of monitoring of, and reporting on, the performance of a health practitioner by a professional peer' and presents an account of how this has affected supervision practice in her agency, bringing about a renewed interest in the role that clinical supervision plays in developing practitioners who are competent and fit to practise in their chosen profession. She describes and evaluates the ongoing learning and development of the skills of supervision by way of combined nursing and allied health supervisor groups in a community health service.

Our second practice-based article also considers collaborative work across disciplines. In this case, Kathy Kerr writes about Child Youth and Family and its partnership in a joint initiative with Police and community non-government organisations, known as Family Safety Teams which aim to provide a more integrated approach to family violence in an effort to close the gaps identified in response to violent family situations. She reflects on the need to build such an initiative on a strong foundation of clear communication, trust and rapport, where each discipline is seen as having an equal contribution to make. She recommends that success will depend on time taken in preparing and establishing such teams so that the frontline workers are familiar with the practices and processes of their fellow team members, and with the diversity of work cultures they will be encountering in their everyday work.