

Nasa Begum

Nasa was a trained social worker with a successful career as researcher, writer, policy analyst, feminist, activist and campaigner. She made a unique contribution to our understanding of the experiences of disabled people, and the need to change attitudes and practice in services seeking to support them. She wrote eloquently but without rancour of the “triple oppression” she encountered as a black disabled woman. She was a lifelong user of social care services, and a former chair of Waltham Forest Association of Disabled People.

Nasa joined the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) in 2003 as Principal Advisor, Participation, having previously held research and development posts at the University of Warwick, the King's Fund, the Policy Studies Institute and the mental health charity Mind. At one time she was policy advisor in a local government women's unit. At SCIE, she was instrumental in setting up the Partners Council, developed SCIE's first comprehensive Participation Strategy, and led work on the support needs of refugees and asylum seekers..

After a 2-year secondment to the Department of Health, working on the policy commitment in *Putting People First* to support a user-led organisation in every authority, Nasa returned to SCIE as Principal Advisor in the Adults Directorate. She also joined the board of the National Centre for Independent Living, was a member of the Care Quality Commission's Mental Health Improvement Board, and was invited to join the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Empowerment Strategy Group.

Nasa wrote widely, both before and after joining SCIE. *Burden of gratitude* (1990) focused on women with disabilities receiving personal care. *Something to be proud of* (1992) was a study of the lives of Asian disabled people and carers in Waltham Forest. Jointly with colleagues, she also wrote *Towards managing user-led services* (1994); *Improving disability services: the way forward for health and social services* (1995); *Beyond samosas and reggae: a guide to developing services for black disabled people* (1995); and *Developing User Involvement: Towards User-Centred Practice in Voluntary Organisations* (2003).

Nasa was herself a leading figure in the disability movement, and involved in the management and governance of a variety of organisations. *Leadership and management in social care* (2008), written with two close colleagues and friends, examines roles involved in the leadership and management of learning in social care education and practice, including the leadership of service users, and promoting diversity and equality through learning.

At SCIE, Nasa's publications included *'I'm not asking to live like the Queen.'* (2005), setting out the vision of service users and carers from seldom-heard groups on the future of social care for adults in England, and a joint report with the Race Equality Unit, *Doing it for themselves: participation and black and minority ethnic service users* (2006). She wrote an article for the Guardian on this report, had others published in Community Care, and gave presentations at a number of conferences.

One of the Victorian poets defines the two important things in life as “Kindness in another's troubles, Courage in your own”. Nasa embodied both qualities, as her friends at SCIE and in her many other networks would attest. She was both passionate and inclusive, an independent and quite private person who readily formed alliances with a variety of others who shared common causes. In a conference speech in 1999, she spoke movingly of the attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers facing survivors of the mental health system, and declared “I believe the only way of properly addressing the rights of any group of people is to make ourselves inclusive and address all the diversity within our movement.”