

## SCIE Knowledge Award 2011

Winner: Professor Jim Mansell, Tizard Centre

### **Speech delivered by Dr Julie Beadle-Brown, Reader in Intellectual and Developmental Disability, Tizard Centre**

Jim Mansell is very sorry that he can't be here with you tonight, but he is absolutely delighted and honoured to accept this award. It is my great pleasure to accept the award on his behalf. I have worked closely with Jim for over ten years and he has taught me most of what I know about designing and evaluating the quality of services, the development of community-based services and the development and implementation of person-centred approaches. He has also taught me the importance of doing rigorous research that makes a difference to the lives of the people who use services.

Jim has spent his whole career trying to build the evidence base for better health and social care services. That evidence base is sorely needed - whether we look at Winterbourne View, where entirely inappropriate service models are being used instead of evidence-based alternatives, or whether we look at the quality of care provided to people with learning disabilities in supported living placements and group homes. Here we typically find very low levels of staff support and skills which results in people not being supported to achieve the quality of life that they could achieve with more skilled support.

Building the knowledge or evidence base requires collaboration between users, carers, professionals and academics; to identify the most important issues, understand their meaning in the lives of people using services and then to rigorously assess and evaluate the way support is provided. Our experience at the Tizard Centre and as part of the National School for Social Care Research is that people using services, their families and professionals are keen to be involved in this process. We have developed a whole series of working partnerships which have produced evidence of how good support can make a real difference in the lives of people with severe and profound disabilities.

However, committed partnership between these groups is not enough to build an effective knowledge base. Knowledge is only useful if it is put into practice and here we are dealing primarily with the culture of decision making in local authorities and central government. Too often research results are ignored because they are inconvenient. They don't fit with the preconceived prejudices that decision makers bring to the job. This problem is often represented as a problem of dissemination, in which blame is laid

at the door of researchers for failing to communicate well enough the results of their work. However SCIE's own work shows that it is perfectly possible to produce and disseminate extremely accessible summaries of research. The problem is better conceptualised as one of research utilisation, in which we ask questions about why some managers pick up and use good research for the benefit of the people they serve and others ignore it. This difference, between services which use research to strengthen their practices and services which essentially ignore research, depends critically on leadership at the top of the organisation. It is a fundamental cultural characteristic of the organisation and is evident all the way down the organisation.

The purpose of the knowledge base is to improve the lives of people using health and social care services. However, just building the knowledge base isn't enough, we have to make sure it makes a difference to people's quality of life and in that SCIE plays a central role.

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