



PRESS RELEASE

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SUE DUNCAN NAMED AS PRESIDENT OF SOCIAL POLICY ASSOCIATION



Sue Duncan has been named as president of the UK Social Policy Association (SPA). She follows Financial Times Public Policy Editor Nicholas Timmins.

The UK's first ever Chief Government Social Researcher, Sue has worked in the public sector for over 30 years – notably with the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury, and in social policy departments such as the Department for Work and Pensions, and Communities and Local Government. Currently an independent consultant in social research and professional

practice, she is a Visiting Professor at the Universities of Bristol and Lincoln, an Academician of the Academy of Social Sciences

and a Fellow of the Market Research Society. She is co-author, with Hugh Bochel, of *Making policy in theory and practice* (Policy Press, 2007).

Sue's appointment comes at a time when social policy academics face the twin challenge of working with reduced university funding and additional demands to demonstrate the value of their research, and she believes that the SPA has a key role to play in helping researchers respond to these imperatives.

She commented: "These are tough times – funding cuts threaten the viability of some social policy departments, research careers and the fostering of expertise for the future; whilst the question of demonstrating impact is a difficult one. Funders – and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in particular – have been testing methods of measuring research impact, and I would agree that tools developed so far are less than perfect given the complexity of the policy development process.

"Nonetheless, I believe that the principle of demonstrating impact is a sound one - ultimately, it could strengthen the reputation of social policy research and researchers. Besides their topical policy contributions SPA members can offer broader perspectives unbounded by current policy concerns, and the SPA is well-placed to facilitate debate between academic researchers and government research-users. I hope to make good use of my experience and contacts within government and with funders to this end."

Professor Caroline Glendinning, Chair of the SPA, added: "We are delighted that Sue has agreed to become the new SPA President - her experience of conducting and commissioning research at the heart of government will be of immense value to the

Association, and we are looking forward to working closely with her over the next three years.”

The SPA promotes the study of social policy and advances the role of social policy research within policy making, practice and wider public debates. The majority of the Association’s members are teachers and researchers in social policy and applied social science within UK higher education, complemented by a significant and growing number of members from other European, Asian and Australasian countries.

Ends (450 words)

Notes for editors

The Social Policy Association is open for membership to academics and practitioners working in social policy, and to others with an interest in UK and international social policy. Individual members receive the *Journal of Social Policy* and *Social Policy & Society* free of charge. For more information visit www.social-policy.org.uk.

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