The Social Policy Association (SPA) is a professional association open for membership to academics and practitioners working in social policy, and to others with an interest in UK and international social policy. The association hosts an annual conference and funds smaller seminar events, as well as producing journals and other publications. In addition, the Association’s executive committee represents the interests of the membership in communication with other professional and academic bodies. The annual SPA awards are presented at the conference, including a lifetime achievement award and best newcomer award. There is also a thriving SPA postgraduate network with a dedicated annual postgraduate conference and regular seminars. More information is available at www.social-policy.com.

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Welcome to the Winter/Spring 2010 issue of Policy World. Inside these pages we cover social policy issues in east Asia courtesy of Junko Yamashita, and host discussion of the recently published SPA guidelines on research ethics for social policy researchers, their genesis, and their fitness for purpose.

If these or other subjects and issues prompt a view you’d like to share, please let me know. As a ‘heads up’ to this end, the July issue may well offer the chance to make policy recommendations to a fresh set of politicians and officials. So, suggestions on a postcard please…

Best wishes

Chris Blunkell
Editor
CHAIR’S INTRODUCTION
CAROLINE GLENDINNING

Welcome to the Winter / Spring issue of Policy World and updates on recent SPA activities and issues of interest to members. Like many other organisations, the SPA was badly hit by the bad weather in January, with anticipated travel difficulties leading us to cancel an Executive Committee meeting. We were nevertheless able to conduct urgent business by email – now that we know this is possible we may be able to consider doing it again in the future, thus helping to reduce the SPA’s carbon footprint.

All our other activities have continued. We received the final report from the annual conference in Edinburgh in 2009 which proved to be very successful financially as well as academically and socially – our thanks to Richard Parry and colleagues for this. Planning for the 2010 conference at Lincoln is now well advanced, thanks to Hugh Bochel and his team. Our survey of postgraduate students who teach on social policy courses, conducted jointly with the Social Work Subject Centre of the Higher Education Academy (SWAP), has also gone well with data entry and analysis now under way. The Editorial Boards of the SPA’s two journals - Social Policy and Society and Journal of Social Policy - have met and confirmed that both journals are very well supported, with high submission rates and increasing numbers of these coming from outside the UK. We are planning a major relaunch of the SPA website (indeed, this may have already happened by the time this issue of Policy World reaches you), with thanks due for the hard work of Adam Whitworth and Steve McKay. And we are working with Chris Blunkell, Policy World editor, to explore ways in which the research findings and other activities of SPA members can be better publicised to reach wider audiences.

Much of my time has been taken up with responding to the Higher Education Funding Council for England’s (HEFCE) consultation on plans for the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework (see p7). I would like to thank all those – particularly the members of the 2008 RAE Panel – who took the time to contribute their views to the SPA’s response. Given the applied nature of much social policy research, we were pleased that social policy and social work was chosen as one of the four subject areas in which the measurement of research impact will be piloted. Together with the Joint University Council (JUC) Social Work Education Committee, we will be organising a seminar of all the social policy and social work departments taking part in the research impact pilots, and we are delighted that Graeme Rosenberg from HEFCE will be attending this event.

SPA CONFERENCE
5 - 7 JULY 2010

The SPA Annual Conference will be held at the University of Lincoln from 5-7 July 2010. The conference theme of ‘Social Policy in Times of Change’ will provide an opportunity to reflect upon recent changes, both international and national, and their implications for social policy. Plenary speakers for this year’s event will be Professor Peter Dreier (Occidental College, Los Angeles), Professor Ruth Lister (Loughborough University), and Dr Branko Milanovic (World Bank).

As usual, the conference will provide delegates with the opportunity to participate in a number of streams:

1. Children and families
2. Work, economy and welfare
3. Governance and the policy process
4. Comparative social policy and research into international institutions, policy and practice
5. Poverty, inequalities and human rights
6. User perspectives
7. Teaching and learning
8. Health and social care
9. Innovations in social policy research
10. Crime, policing and criminal justice
11. Housing and welfare
12. Ageing and the lifecourse
13. Demographic and environmental change
14. Service design, delivery and use
15. The future of social policy
16. Open stream

One innovation for this year is the introduction of symposia, with three or four abstracts linked to a particular theme. These will potentially allow participants to engage more deeply with their special interests, and the SPA will seek feedback on the extent to which these are successful. A second change is the integration of a postgraduate element into the conference – see p20 for more details.

Further information about the conference and a booking form can be found at: www.lincoln.ac.uk/conferences/sp2010.
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Postgraduate students seeking to attend at the subsidised rate should provide a letter confirming their status from their Head of Department.

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I agree that my email details may be circulated on the list of delegates.  Please Tick  

REGISTRATION FEES: (full residential conference fee includes accommodation, breakfasts, lunches, tea and coffee breaks, reception and conference dinner)

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Day delegate rates for SPA /BSA members only

| Day delegate Monday | £75 | £95 | £ |
| Reception and conference dinner Monday | £60 | £60 | £ |
| Day delegate Tuesday | £110 | £140 | £ |
| Day delegate Wednesday | £75 | £95 | £ |

Day delegate rates for non SPA/BSA members

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Volume 38, 2010, 4 issues, January, April, July and October
Print ISSN: 0305-5736 Online ISSN: 1470-8442

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UK SPA members will not need reminding that the UK higher education funding councils have started planning the new Research Excellence Framework (REF), the successor to the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). The SPA has submitted its response to the recent consultation on the initial plans for the REF, expressing broad support for the new emphasis on research impact in the REF but also considerable caution - much depends on how research impact is measured and how this measurement relates to other dimensions of quality assessment. For example, it will be vitally important for peer review of the scientific quality of research – which will remain the cornerstone of the REF – to be compatible and consistent with assessments of impact. Poor quality research should not be rewarded because it has high impact. Conversely, high quality paradigm-shifting ‘blue skies’ research should not be penalised because of lack of evidence of immediate impact or application.

The challenges of developing robust measures of research impact - including problems of attribution, timescale and outcome measurement - are multiple and well-rehearsed. The exploitation of research by private sector enterprise is not an appropriate measure for social policy, and extensive piloting and testing may be necessary to develop a methodology that commands the respect of the whole academic community. Consequently, we have argued that the weighting given to research impact should be far lower than the proposed 35 per cent of overall assessment - at least in the first round of the REF.

Linked to the consultation, there have been discussions between the SPA and the British Sociological Association (BSA) about the configuration of subpanels for the REF, and we were helped considerably in this regard by the experiences of the 2008 RAE Social Administration, Social Policy and Social Work subpanel members. We recognised there were strong pressures from university departments that combine Sociology and Social Policy teaching and research for a single, integrated subpanel – such a development would avoid difficult decisions about splitting research submissions between two subpanels, submitting all Sociology research to the Social Administration subpanel, or vice versa. However, the balance of opinion from SPA members was strongly against such a merger on the grounds that it risked compromising the multi-disciplinary nature of so much social policy research. There were also concerns about potential differences in the evaluation of theoretical and applied research. We have emphasised in our response to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) that this conclusion represents only the views of the SPA and urged further consultation with organisations representing social work and criminology, which would also be affected by any subpanel merger.

HEFCE has subsequently announced pilot projects to test the proposed approach to assessing research impact. Social work and social policy is one of the four subject areas to be included in the pilots, with 11 universities taking part. Impact is such an important feature of so much social policy research and the SPA is taking a close interest in the pilots. HEFCE will be seeking feedback from universities on the pilots, but so far has no plans to seek subject-specific feedback. The SPA, together with the Joint University Council (JUC) Social Work Education Committee (which represents academic social work), will be organising a workshop for the departments taking part in the pilots to bring together their experiences and identify lessons that might be relevant for research impact assessment in other subject areas. We will report on this in the summer issue of Policy World.

Caroline Glendinning

In February SPA chair Caroline Glendinning alerted members by email to an opportunity for social policy academics to put themselves forward as potential contributors to a UK broadsheet newspaper’s coverage of a range of issues including:

- local government
- health (general)
- social work
- children’s services
- adult services
- social care
- local level public finance
- education (all sectors)
- voluntary sector
- communities
- social inclusion.

The newspaper has indicated an on-going need for sources of informed comment, although the anticipated Spring general election is likely to throw up more specific short-term opportunities. Response from members to date has been enthusiastic, and there is still time for indications of interest.

Chris Blunkell who, besides editing Policy World is undertaking media work on behalf of the SPA, explained: "Without being too specific, if members are interested in contributing in this way they must be comfortable committing to a point of view in a concise way, and understand that speed of response is very important. No less importantly, whilst this opportunity has great potential in terms of offering both personal/ career profile and providing a platform for particular perspectives, it is important that contributors are comfortable with a degree of ambiguity – those who have dealt with the press will know that when they do so there is an extent to which they lose control of how they and their they perspectives are represented."

Members interested in exploring this idea should contact Chris on 01227 772747/07941 831341 (chris.blunkell@btinternet.com).
Over the past few years, international relations have become a dynamic and expanding portfolio for the SPA Executive Committee. Social Policy as a field of research and study is cosmopolitan in terms of its interests, values and activities, and the SPA has a growing international membership. We have concentrated our efforts on raising the profile of international social policy issues within the SPA domestically; raising the profile of the SPA overseas; and consolidating relations between the SPA and various learned societies, associations and networks around the world.

Here, we summarise various achievements on this front and identify key issues which we are currently addressing.

- The SPA clearly identifies the international and global dimensions of social policy as a core concern. We aim to be an outward looking association with international and global aspects of social policy, a broad world view, and engagement with scholars residing outside of as well as within the UK at the heart of what we do and how we go about it.

- Overseas members’ benefits: one in five SPA members is based outside the UK. Non-UK members are mainly from Australia, Republic of Ireland, Germany, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. SPA members, wherever they are based, now enjoy the full range of membership benefits.

- Policy World carries an international social policy contribution in each edition. So far, we have had contributions on (and from) Africa, the Middle East and East Asia, US and Argentina (see back issues). This issue of Policy World carries a feature on Japanese social policy from Junko Yamashita. From early 2010 members will be able to access past features from the international social policy pages of Policy World.

- SPA annual conference: we have in the past encouraged conference organisers to include an explicit international dimension in the main plenary sessions through choice either of speaker or subject matter, and it is now formalised into policy that at least one of the plenary sessions at the annual conference will be devoted to this. Efforts to promote awareness of and registration at the conference by overseas members (and non-members) have been successful. At the 2009 SPA Annual Conference in Edinburgh, some 10% of delegates were from outside the UK.

- The International and Comparative Social Policy Group continues to be an active presence in the UK social policy community. Currently, Zoe Irving and Nicola Yeates who jointly convene this group are revising and updating the ICSP website (www.globalwelfare.net) to include significant new features. The ICSP jiscmail (ICSP@jiscmail.ac.uk) continues to be active in disseminating information on relevant events, publications and various policy issues. ICSP is an open forum for all SPA members, and the convenors are open to anyone wishing to become involved in it. Postgraduate members of the SPA are especially welcome.

- A number of reciprocal agreements with social policy-oriented learned societies around the world have been established, with more in train.

- Members of the SPA and the US-based Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM) have reciprocal rights to join the other association at a reduced rate (£34 for APPAM members to join SPA and $70 for SPA members to join APPAM).

- We are in the process of agreeing an arrangement whereby members of the SPA and the newly formed Australian Social Policy Association (ASPA) have reciprocal rights to attend the other’s conference at the membership rate. ASPA are invited to join the SPA at the rate of £20 for their first year of membership.

NB If you wish to take advantage of the SPA rate for these organisations, you should state that you are a member of the SPA when registering.

- In 2009 we offered support to colleagues in Kenya to establish an African Social Policy Association - currently undergoing registration in Kenya. We will bring you more details of this later this year.

- Discussions are on-going with the Taiwanese Association for Social Welfare (TASW) and we hope to announce an agreement with TASW in Spring 2010.

Details of each of the organisations with which we have a reciprocal agreement will be posted on the SPA website. More generally, if you plan to attend an overseas conference and are willing to act as an ambassador for the SPA we would like to hear from you. Finally, we are seeking to expand the range of Associations with which we have reciprocal arrangements, so please draw our attention to contacts with colleagues and associations of relevance to the SPA.

Nicola Yeates and Chris Holden
With two slogans - “From concrete to people” and “A government led by politicians, not by bureaucrats” - the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) celebrated a historic victory over the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in the August 2009 general election.

In a reversal of its previous position, the centre-left DPJ won 308 of 480 seats in the lower house, compared to the conservative LDP’s 119, with a new coalition government formed by Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama between the DPJ, the Social Democratic Party and the People’s New Party. Many people, myself included, have a high expectation that this new government will significantly change the nature of the Japanese welfare regime.

The DPJ’s manifesto, the 2010 budget, and policy implemented over the last three months suggest that the Hatoyama administration is changing the Japanese political system, supporting the line that the Japanese welfare regime is shifting towards stronger productive and protective intentions such as increased spending on social security and education.

The new government has been working to reform the governance system and restore the welfare state - clearly written into its vision for the general election campaign. This vision comprised five pillars:

1) the elimination of wasteful spending
2) investment in child and educational services
3) securing pensions and medical care
4) the promotion of regional sovereignty, and
5) maintaining employment and economy.

In addition to these core election promises, an additional 180 policies and items were proposed at the launch of the new government (www.dpj.or.jp/english/manifesto/manifesto.html). In this piece, therefore, I will aim to highlight the general policy directions of the new government, and how they might impact on the Japanese welfare regime over the next four years.

What strikes me as the DPJ’s primary areas for reform of the Japanese welfare regimes are its pledges to abolish bureaucrat-led decision-making, a substantive decrease in public works spending, and the expansion of social welfare spending. All three policies are interlinked, but are particularly significant with regard to changing the nature of Japanese social policy.

Abolishing bureaucrat-led decision-making

Strong state bureaucracy is commonly considered to be a central characteristic of the political system in East Asia, and Japan is no exception - it has not been political parties but rather the state machine that has exercised the strongest influence on the development of welfare policies.

The DPJ began with the decision to abolish the informal administrative vice-ministers’ meeting, where almost all policies had been decided since the end of the 1880s. As each administrative vice-minister tried to protect their share of the budget, and represented the special interests of Diet (Japanese parliament) members, it had been difficult to make significant shifts in the distribution of the budget. In order to realise a system of politics in which a ruling party’s politicians work out policy measures in a responsible way, the Hatoyama administration would need to take significant steps towards genuine political accountability.
administration has established a National Strategy Bureau directly under the prime minister to set policies on the nation’s budget. In addition, it has appointed more than 100 Diet members to posts in ministries and agencies with central roles in drafting, developing and deciding policies.

Public works spending
High expenditure on public works has long been part of economic policy for the maintenance and creation of jobs. It was presumed that public works played a role in narrowing the gap between urban and rural economies by providing income and employment opportunities for local regions. The percentage of GDP devoted to public works expenditure in Japan was extraordinarily high until the end of the 1990s, reaching 6.2 per cent in 1998 compared to 1.4 per cent in the U.K. (1998), 1.9 per cent in the U.S.A. (1997), 2.0 per cent in Germany (1997) and 2.8 per cent in France (1997). After a series of structural reforms in recent years, the percentage of the GDP spent on public works decreased, but was still relatively high at 4.0 per cent in 2004. As a result, the percentage of employees in the construction sector is higher than that in other OECD countries. Soon after the Hatoyama government came to office the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism announced the abolition of a massive dam construction project - symbolic of the new government’s will to depart from utilising public works as a central economic policy.

According to the 2010 fiscal budget, public works-related expenditure has been cut by 18.3 per cent. The significance of this decision is not merely in the figure itself, but also in how and where these cuts are to be made. Review of all government programmes has been computed under a new system, the Government Revitalisation Unit, which scrutinises budgetary requests before the public (live on TV and Internet) with the aims of eliminating the wasteful use of public money and bringing transparency to the budget decision-making process.

The expansion of social welfare spending
The new government also promised not to cut 220 billion yen (about £15 billion) from the social security-related budget which previous LDP governments had overseen. Instead, the DPJ plans to expand the budget in areas such as childrearing, education, health and social care, and employment. One of the centrepiece policies is child allowance as a form of basic income. This annual allowance of 312,000 yen (approx £2,080) will be paid to all children under 15 years of age (half of the allowance - 156,000 yen - will be paid in 2010 and 2011, then the full amount from 2012). Given that the family-related social expenditure per GDP was 0.7 per cent in Japan in 2003, which was significantly below the OECD average of 2 per cent and the third lowest after U.S.A. and Korea, this is a very significant development. Furthermore, considering the previous dependent child allowance under the limited annual income cap was 60,000 yen (approx £400) annually, and around double that for children under three years old, the new scheme places the Japanese standard higher than most countries.

Other listed items on the DPJ manifesto include making public high school education free through tuition fee subsidies, restoring the additional living support allowance paid to single parent household, and creating a unified pension system ensuring a minimum monthly pension of 70,000 yen (approx £466).

The 2010 budget, submitted at the end of December 2009, includes a 9.8 per cent increase in social welfare-related expenditure. Included in this calculation is the cost of child allowance and free high-school education, as well as employment subsidies for Japan’s large companies (funding for 750,000 employees) and small and medium-sized enterprises (funding for 1.55 million employees). Although there does not appear to have been significant progress in the area of pension system reform, we can still give the Hatoyama government high marks for the policies they have implemented.

Income inequality
Weakening the bureaucracy, decreasing public works-related expenditure and, at the same time, expanding livelihood security-related spending are appropriate policies for restoring Japanese society given that each had been exhausted by previous policies. Preceding governments, particularly the Koizumi government (2001-2005), prioritised economic policy at the expense of welfare policy. Policies which aimed to deregulate the labour market, privatising postal services and decreasing public works were implemented without any effective policy to secure or maintain decent employment opportunities or standard of living. As a result, Japan has the highest level of income inequality and relative poverty among all OECD nations.
Between the mid-1980s and 2000, in direct contrast to the low level of income inequality in the post-war era, Japan’s Gini coefficient for disposable income (a common measurement for income inequality) rose to 13 per cent - almost twice the OECD average of seven per cent. In 2000, the relative poverty rate among Japan’s working-age population was exceeded only by the USA.

Japan’s tax and social security system has been ineffective in correcting market income disparities caused by an increasing dualism in the Japanese labour market, where one-third of employed people are in non-regular employment and in 2008 earned only 40 per cent of the average hourly wage of regular workers. Another dismaying finding is that 58 per cent of working single parents in Japan lived in relative poverty in 2000, despite the fact that 83 per cent of single mothers (who represent the overwhelming majority of single parents) were employed and 70 per cent received the childcare allowance. According to a working paper by the OECD, the child poverty rate in 2000 was higher on a disposable income basis than on an initial income basis for all types of households except non-working single-parent households. What this means is that rather than reducing child poverty, taxation and social security in Japan has contributed to its increase. Given this finding, it is understandable that the Hatoyama administration is intent on increasing social welfare spending.

Uncertainties
As I write this, 120 days have passed since the launch of the Hatoyama government which, so far, has been diligently implementing policies set out in its party and election platform. On the surface, it looks different to previous LDP governments which tended to forget what they promised before elections. However, I cannot ignore a number of uncertainties and difficulties facing this new government.

First, whilst seemingly reluctant to expand the provision of social services, the government appears rather keen to expand and create cash allowances. This is because the latter doesn’t require significant administrative cost and thus fits well with their policy to weaken the bureaucracy. The current government’s preference for cash allowances is clearly apparent in child allowance, subsiding the cost of high school education, minimum income guarantees for all farming households, and minimum pension guarantees. However, cash allowance schemes can often be inefficient when not combined with adequate social service provision. For instance, a shortage of childcare services has been pointed out - it is said that approximately 850,000 households would use them if spaces were available. However, the government hasn’t yet made clear what the expansion of services will entail. Whilst the implementation of child allowance should be highly valued, this itself does not give sufficient support to childbearing or to parents (and more precisely mothers) to fully participate in both economic activities and in family life.

The same observation can be made with regard to its employment policy. The Hatoyama administration plans to provide up to 100,000 yen per month (around £665) to those who have already exhausted unemployment benefits and are in vocational training. However, without a policy supporting the creation of decent jobs and, more importantly, reducing the discriminative treatment toward non-regular workers, encouraging people to participate in the current labour market may lead to increased poverty. A more serious and timely issue concerns the financial implications of these policies. The Cabinet approved a 92.30 trillion yen initial budget for 2010 - the largest ever. The scrutiny on public spending by the Government Revitalisation Unit saved only 677 billion yen. Thus, the government has to issue 44.30 trillion yen in new government bonds, which is an alarming increase of 33.1 per cent on the previous initial budget.

Even though these central issues remains, the policy direction of the new government is likely to change the nature of the Japanese welfare regime - from relying heavily upon welfare provision for families and corporations with social policies playing a subjugative role to economic development, to having more productive and protective elements. This has far-reaching implications for where Japan should be placed in the welfare regime modelling debate and, moreover, for the existence of an East Asian welfare regime. What is for certain is that for those who are curious about social policy development, Japan is becoming a country to keep an eye on.
FOCUS ON SPA ETHICS

SPA guidelines on research ethics for social policy researchers, designed to complement existing ethical guidance, were published on the SPA website in 2009. Designed to raise awareness of members’ research responsibilities and offer recommendations on how they might be addressed, the guidelines have already succeeded in their aim of prompting discussion of how ethical dilemmas in research might be resolved. In this section of Policy World, Karen Clarke and Kirsten Rummery explain how and why the guidelines came into being; whilst Paul Spicker and David Byrne argue that the SPA guidelines fail to counterbalance principles relevant to social policy against the presumptions embedded in other codes. Finally, co-editor of the journal Ethics and Social Welfare Derek Clifford points out that whilst researchers have vested interests and therefore need ethical scrutiny, it should not be at the expense of ensuring ethically healthy institutional cultures.

THE GUIDELINES IN CONTEXT

In 2006 the SPA Executive set up a working group to develop a set of guidelines on research ethics for social policy researchers to complement existing ethical guidance, such as that produced by the Social Research Association (SRA), and to provide a framework to help SPA members identify and address the ethical issues which may arise in the conduct of social policy research. Unlike an Ethics Code, the recommendations are not binding on SPA members and there are no sanctions associated with failing to follow them.

The guidelines were informed by a seminar for SPA members held in 2008, and by consultation on an earlier draft. Research ethics are a contested issue and the responses to the draft guidelines reflected the differing perspectives of social policy researchers and the diversity of approaches to the definition and conduct of research. A final version was agreed by the SPA Executive in late 2008 and published on the website early in 2009 (www.social-policy.com/documents/SPA_code_ethics_jan09.pdf).

The guidelines are intended to raise awareness among SPA members of their responsibilities to different constituencies when conducting research, to offer recommendations on how to address these and to promote continuing discussion of how ethical dilemmas in research can most satisfactorily be resolved. The issues with which social policy is concerned means that social policy research has four features which differentiate it to some extent from other social science research: it tends to address both academic and policy/practice questions, it engages with users of welfare services, it works with a range of disciplines and research methodologies, and it has a responsibility to disseminate results to a range of audiences - both academic and policy/practice. The suggestions contained in the guidelines about how to address these issues will inevitably provoke continuing discussion among social policy researchers on the nature of research, its philosophical foundations and the multiple power relationships involved we believe they will serve a useful purpose.

Karen Clarke (University of Manchester) and Kirstein Rummery (University of Stirling) were members of Ethics Guidelines Working Group from 2006-2009.

UNETHICAL GUIDELINES

Paul Spicker (The Robert Gordon University) and David Byrne (University of Durham)

The SPA guidelines for ethical research have borrowed liberally from the codes published by other social science disciplines. The preamble to the guidelines recognises social policy as a field concerned with academic, policy and practice issues; that it engages with service users; that it works with a range of disciplines and methodologies; and that it disseminates results to a range of audiences. However, most of the guidelines have been stitched together from existing codes, without any thought as to how they relate to social policy in practice. The codes which have been developed in social science belong to a different kind of academic subject, concerned with the reputation of the discipline and the advancement of knowledge, rather than the applied research that is central to social policy.

Obligations to society

The researcher’s “obligations to society” are considered in four headings:

- the standing of the discipline
- compliance with the law
- dealing with conflicts of interest, and
- reflexivity - identified with openness
about research methods and their limitations.

There is only one sentence about our obligation to society: “Social policy researchers have a general responsibility to undertake research that will contribute to the public good and to ensure that their research is appropriately applied and disseminated.”

This is woefully inadequate. The work of the researcher should not lend itself to procedures which are offensive, degrading or detrimental to people’s welfare. In disciplinary, non-applied research, the question of beneficence is usually translated into a concern with the research process, because there is a presumption that the research will have no other effect. In the case of social policy, that presumption will not do. Social policy is done for a purpose, and every researcher has a moral duty to consider what the impact of the research might be.

The rights that the SPA document accords to participants include:
- the right to exercise consent
- the right to withdraw from research
- the right not to be exposed to avoidable harm
- the duty on researchers to take all possible steps to protect them from harm
- the protection of their rights, interests, sensitivities and privacy
- the protection of those who are vulnerable by virtue of incapacity, social status or powerlessness.
- confidentiality, including confidentiality of data
- anonymity
- provision of information about support services.
- sharing research findings with participants, and
- user involvement.

These principles are not wrong in every case, but they mainly relate to social cases.

Rights

The first problem is that the guidelines are only concerned with the rights of participants. A participant is someone who is taking part in the research, but participants are not the only people who might be affected. A subject is someone who is being studied whether or not that person is participating, and the interests of participants and subjects may conflict. We need to understand that the agreement of a participant – for example, an agency worker, a carer, a community activist - is not a guarantee of protection for research subjects (service users, people being cared for, members of a community) in any case where the subject is broader or more widely inclusive.

In the research process, both the participant and the subject have rights, but they are not necessarily the same rights. Everyone affected by research has general rights – for example, human rights, or general legal rights. Both participants and subjects have the right not to be abused or oppressed. Participants in research, however, also have particular rights which are created thorough the interaction of the researcher with the participant. If, for example, a researcher promises the participant that they will be able to see a recording, that promise should be kept. As a corollary, researchers should avoid making promises they will not be able to keep – like misplaced promises of confidentiality – because that puts them in the position where they must breach one ethical principle or another.

The second set of problems relates to the clutch of principles taken from medical research. Medical research works almost wholly within the private sphere. The right of individuals to consent (and not to be researched if they don’t want to be), and the presumption of confidentiality and the treatment of data as confidential are all aspects of the private sphere. That principle has crucial limitations. Many things are not private – like the actions of government or of public authorities. No consent is generally required to report legal cases or the proceedings of a court, or government policy, or the deliberations of a democratic body, or a submission to a public consultation. The whole point of laws like the Freedom of Information Act is to clarify that such information is public, and should not be treated as if it is private. And the suggestion that people should be treated confidentially and anonymously regardless of their status or role is an absurdity which threatens the feasibility of any research about government action.

When the SPA’s guidelines state, then, that research has to depend on informed consent, or that “Information provided to a researcher in the context of a research study should be treated as confidential”, they are deeply misguided. Issues of social policy are characteristically public in their nature. There ought to be a good reason not to reveal information, rather than a presumption that it cannot be revealed.

Avoiding harm

The third problem relates to the duty to avoid harm. The guidelines suggest that every participant should be protected from avoidable harm, and that the researcher has a duty to avoid adverse consequences. This is based on the principle drawn from the Nuremberg rules - “The experiment should be so conducted as to avoid all unnecessary physical and mental suffering and injury.” In this context, it is misapplied. Social policy is concerned with policy, and particularly with the outcomes of policy. Any policy may have good effects for some people and bad effects for others. Any change, any effect which the research has, will affect people for good or ill. When a policy researcher evaluates an agency, there is a risk that people in that agency will lose their jobs. When a researcher reviews the operation of a policy, changes to improve the position of some people may threaten the position of others. When a researcher is investigating the abuse or violation of people who are vulnerable, it exposes the perpetrator to risk.

There are probably social policy researchers who will be uncomfortable with the idea that they are causing harm. They must learn to live with it. The ethical objective is not to minimise avoidable harm; it is to ensure that any adverse consequences will be legitimate and defensible.
Relationships
Several elements in the guidelines relate respectively to relationships with sponsors or funders and their relationships with employed contract researchers. The elements relating to the performance of contracts are reasonable enough - but what are they doing in an ethics statement? Performance of a contract is a matter of contractual obligation, the execution of tasks in return for reward. They are matters of civil law and market activity. Contracts are not set in stone; most are open to renegotiation. It is unusual for any research to finish in exactly the place where it set out.

There are obligations to colleagues, too. The SPA statement says: “At a time when short-term contract research constitutes a significant proportion of the research work undertaken in social policy, social policy researchers in secure employment have important responsibilities to promote the interests of colleagues who are in a less secure position.”

We certainly have a responsibility to fellow workers. There is an obligation of solidarity to stand by them in terms of employment and conditions. Is this, however, the kind of consideration which should drive a statement of ethics? Is a research project which employs a research assistant more ethical, more virtuous or more consistent with moral principles - other things being equal - than one that does not? We do not think so; and the confusion of ethical conduct with the interests of academics working in social policy is characteristic of the moral myopia that blights these guidelines.

More seriously, the SPA guidelines argue that researchers also have a responsibility to maintain good relations with sponsors or funders in the interests of ensuring the continuing provision of research funding. Here the SPA has lined up on the wrong side of the debate. Academic material is liable to be used – and abused – by the people who pay for it. Researchers are under constant pressure to compromise their findings. The SPA seems to think we need to be more subservient to research funders. This is almost the opposite of what they should have said. The duty which researchers have is not just a duty to the funders. There are higher duties, to civil society and the public which is engaged in consultation, and the processes of governance to which the researcher is contributing. Our general responsibility is not only to speak truth to those with power, but to speak uncomfortable truth very loudly indeed.

Do the SPA guidelines matter?
Most practising researchers will ignore the SPA’s guidelines, or cherry-pick them so that they can legitimate their activity. It is common enough in research applications to cite any code of guidance that happens to be convenient: researchers are liable to flit from the Social Research Association (SRA), to the British Sociological Association (BSA), to university rules, according to the project they are doing and the most effective way of presenting their work.

If that was the whole story, these guidelines would not matter; but it is not the whole story. Despite the aspirations of the document’s preamble, and the protestations of the SPA committee, these are not going to be applied as flexible guidelines. Research ethics has become a central element in research governance. Research ethics committees (RECs) are applying ethics codes literally. RECs are looking for clear, transparent rules, and that is what the SPA, whether it realises it or not, is giving them. This is the environment we now work in, and one of the central tests of a scheme of this sort is how it will stand up to scrutiny in practice. The rules which the SPA is introducing are generally the wrong ones. We needed guidelines for social policy because we needed to be able to counterbalance principles that were relevant to social policy against the presumptions embedded in other codes. What they have done instead is to reinforce the idea that critical work, engaging with public policy, is liable to be unethical. From the perspective of research in social policy, then, the guidelines fail as completely as it is possible for them to fail.

I appreciate the invitation to comment on the SPA draft policy and the critique offered by David Byrne and Paul Spicker. I was asked to “consider the issues of concern raised in the critique, and whether or not...there are issues we have missed or simply misrepresented”. The SPA policy is criticised for its formulaic reliance on existing statements of research ethics that emphasise compliance with institutional and legal requirements, rather than a more critical and more ethical commitment to the values of social policy as a discipline.

Given the contentious nature of ethical values it is not surprising that Byrne and Spicker find plenty to disagree with. The tendency to conflate universal reason with conformity to dominant social norms has long been one of the criticisms of a conservative form of Kantianism. It is evident that current organisational business practices do indeed demand compliance with legal requirements and their own policies and interests, and that research ethics committees are being used to contribute to that end, using ‘rational’ principles, and reducing ethics to institutional compliance. However, for some people this is evidently acceptable – and ethical. The tension in social policy research ethics is precisely to balance justifiable aspects of accountability to employers, funders, the public, and the law with a critical view of the role of research in uncovering evidence that dominant interests have no interest in revealing – or are positively hostile towards. The option of a ‘neutral’ (‘rational’ or ‘scientific’) stance is itself a choice of values with ethical and political implications.
Social policy values
In contemporary ethical debate, ‘principles’ are not necessarily an adequate focus. Equally important are the values upon which the discipline should be based, the social and cultural context, and the virtues of character towards which researchers should aspire. The values of the discipline are addressed in the draft guidelines, but their implications could be more thoroughly addressed. The discipline is characterised as concerned with understanding the “distribution and delivery of resources in response to social need” and by a commitment to “engage with service users.” These are significant values that might over-ride specific ‘principles’. The guidelines need to recognise very clearly that researchers have to make judgements in uncertain situations. For example, commitment to the advancement of knowledge should be cognisant of others’ rights, but it will be impossible always to meet these ethical obligations where powerful interests clash with those of service users: some rights may need to be over-ridden. The statement that such a commitment does not over-ride rights, (Section B), thus runs the risk of privileging those in power.

Virtues and judgments
Consequently, there needs to be some emphasis upon the necessary ‘virtues’ of social policy researchers. This serves to emphasise their responsibility for being ethically and politically aware, making situated ethical decisions - not merely applying principles. Virtue theory in ethics demands space to make judgements – and be responsible for them. These virtues might include having a personal commitment to understanding and progressing the meeting of social needs, in engagement with service users, as well as other virtues such as care in dealing with research participants. They would also include the ability to be critical about virtues and principles, and competence to assess powers and vulnerabilities. They would then be able to make informed judgements about when to break promises, pass on confidences or defend harmful outcomes, all of which take place - as Byrne and Spicker observe. Such virtues need to be described and supported in an ethics statement that critically recognises and values professional judgement and character.

Research relationships
A number of the criticisms stem from the way ethical statements, including this one, view ethics as a matter primarily for individuals. The aim of ethically sensitive research needs to take account of the social and organisational environment and the relationships in which the researcher is enmeshed. Researchers need support in the face of powerful funders and employers, as well as regulation for themselves. The conditions for ethical behaviour and the culture of the research environment need to be more adequately interrogated.

In our current manageralist climate employers have control over working conditions, as well as ethics committees. In addition to requiring researchers to care for participants and others, funders and employers need to be questioned about their conduct towards all stakeholders. Does the membership of ethics committees include service users? Does it include anyone familiar with methodologies used by social policy researchers? Does it demonstrate adherence to equal opportunities policies? Is it made clear to funders and government departments that there are professional expectations for ethical social policy research, to be evidenced in policies and contracts? Do they adhere to equal opportunity and fair employment policies, (including those on short-term contracts) and do they practice transparency in communications? It is surely ethical to have some idea of what their purpose and policies are. This takes the ethical focus off the individual researcher, and shares it more equitably, raising questions about the culture of ethical research beyond formal requirements. If researchers are able to draw on these kinds of statements of expectations of responsibilities for funders and employers then they can use them in deliberation, negotiation and defence.

The wider effects of research
Byrne and Spicker strongly point out that participants are not the only people affected by research, and that there is a moral obligation to consider the effects of research more widely. There may be various interested people including those who might not easily be defined as either participants or subjects of research. Given the values of social policy research as stated, then surely the implications of research should be critically scrutinised not merely for the interests of the ‘general public’, but much more specifically for the interests of groups whose social needs may not be well met by current arrangements. This point also connects with the issue of professional judgement and reflexivity. Researchers need to consider not just their values but the social locations they occupy and the implications for stakeholders. However this applies not only to individuals but also to organisations, including the SPA. Will the SPA veer towards claiming neutrality and ‘scientific rationalism’, or will it defend the values upon which the discipline is based and support researchers whose character and practices are consistent with those ends?

In sum, although the arguments of Byrne and Spicker appear to be expressed strongly, the effect of the focus of these draft guidelines does seem to provide ethics committees with a convenient list of disciplinary rules, with little counterbalancing critique. Researchers have vested interests, and need ethical scrutiny - but so do all other stakeholders. More positively, the values of the discipline should be thoroughly worked out, and their implications highlighted concurrently with the expectations of, and support for, ethically healthy institutional cultures and morally responsible practitioners able to take forward research with a critical awareness of social policy values, and possessing the practical wisdom to deal with clashing interests and ideals in the real world.

Derek Clifford is a co-editor of the journal Ethics and Social Welfare, and a former Reader in Social Work with experience in social work practice and research and co-author of Anti-oppressive Ethics and Values in Social Work.
SPA ANNUAL AWARDS 2010

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The SPA is pleased to announce the call for nominations for this year’s Annual Awards, sponsored by Cambridge University Press and The Policy Press. Winners will be presented with their awards by SPA President, Nick Timmins (Financial Times), at the special Gala Dinner held during the SPA conference at the University of Lincoln from 5-7 July 2010.

All nominators must be SPA members. Please read the rules and criteria for each award carefully before making nominations, which are invited for the following awards:

Lifetime Achievement
Entries are limited to SPA members and must be nominated by five other SPA members. The award will be made to the person the judges feel:

☑ has made persistent contributions to research and organisation (of major conferences, influential reports, SPA Executive posts etc.) that has raised the external profile of the subject

☑ has achieved recognition by non-academics with interest in social policy – e.g. journalists, campaigners and lobbyists, activists, user communities

☑ has an acknowledged international reputation as measured in terms of translations, citations, projects, academic posts

☑ has made contributions to professional bodies and associations

☑ has had an impact on political process/discourse (e.g. advisor to government, consultant to voluntary bodies/local government); and

☑ has achieved esteem measured in terms of journal editing/establishing, promotion of social policy within other social sciences, membership of research councils or similar bodies.

Nominations for this award must be accompanied by the candidate’s full CV.

Best Newcomer
This award will be granted to a lecturer/researcher within five years of their first post-graduation position, and who is judged to have made a significant early contribution to the field of social policy. Entries must be nominated by two SPA members and nominees must themselves be members. The judges may use (but are not limited to) one or more of the following criteria in making their decision:

☑ evidence of a significant publications record: e.g. books and book chapters published, articles in key social policy journals, cited works, presentations at key national and international conferences
SPA ANNUAL AWARDS 2010

MEET THE JUDGES

Fran Bennett
Besides her work as an independent consultant, Fran Bennett works half time as a Senior Research Fellow at the Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of Oxford. Her focus is social policy, and she is engaged in teaching and research. She has a particular interest in social security policy; gender issues; and poverty, income distribution and participation.

Julia S. O’Connor
Julia S. O’Connor is Professor of Social Policy at the Policy and Research Institute, University of Ulster. Her main area of research is social inequality and welfare states in comparative perspective, which includes work on social policy in the EU in the context of changing governance, the impact of liberalism on social policy, gender and citizenship.

Martin Powell
Martin Powell is Professor of Health and Social Policy at the Health Services Management Centre, University of Birmingham, and is editor of Social Policy and Administration. His main research interests include health policy, the history of the welfare state, principles of the welfare state, citizenship and consumerism. He has published over 10 books and 70 articles.

Roy Sainsbury
Roy Sainsbury is a Research Director and Professor of Social Policy at the Social Policy Research Unit, University of York, where he leads a team of researchers working on welfare and employment projects. Since beginning his social research career in 1988 he has specialised in social security, employment, sickness and disability, welfare to work and the administration and delivery of benefits.

Nick Timmins
Nick Timmins is Public Policy Editor of the Financial Times, a visiting Professor in Public Management at King’s College, London, a senior associate of the Nuffield Trust and president of the SPA. He is the author of the award-winning Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State, and was a founder of The Independent.
The Small Grants Scheme continues to attract a large number of high quality applications. To facilitate the sustainability of the scheme, a decision to place an annual cash limit on the total value of awards made was reported to the 2009 SPA AGM – effective from 1 January 2010, and to be reviewed annually. To ensure that funds are available throughout the year, the scheme will now operate in two rounds – one for 1 January to 30 June and one for 1 July to 31 December. For each of the two periods the scheme will operate on a ‘first come – first served’ basis. Each award will continue to offer a maximum of £500.

In addition, from 1 January 2010 a Postgraduate Small Grants Scheme has been introduced – also with an annual cash limit and operating in two rounds. Full details of the new postgraduate scheme have been publicised through the SPA mailing list and on the SPA website, and an information session for postgraduate members will be held at the 2010 SPA Annual Conference.

During 2010, the SPA Executive would particularly like to encourage applications to the Small Grants Scheme for awards to support events with an international focus and/or to facilitate attendance from overseas.

Majella Kilkey
Small Grants Officer

Applications are invited for The SPA’s standard and postgraduate Small Grants Schemes - designed to help fund seminars and workshops dealing with research and/or learning & teaching in a way that is of benefit to the social policy community and SPA members. The focus should be on activities that will benefit a group or network rather than individuals.

During 2010, applications for awards to support events with an international focus and/or to facilitate attendance from overseas are particularly encouraged.

Funds will be made available in two rounds of applications over the year. Round one runs from 1 January to 30 June and round two from 1 July to 31st December. Applications are welcomed at any point within each award period, and funds are allocated on a first-come first-served basis.

Each award offers a maximum of £500. Applicants will be expected to:

- be SPA members
- publicise their seminar/workshop as widely as possible, including through SPA channels
- write a short report after the event to SPA members via Policy World
- use this as an opportunity to recruit new SPA members (including marketing via other channels, distribution of SPA leaflets, use of SPA logo, etc.)
- make the seminar/workshop as inclusive as possible (attendance need not be limited to SPA members)
- raise the profile of the SPA to external agencies (government, independent sector, research centres, etc) in the UK and other countries as appropriate, and
- provide a provisional budget which must include a full breakdown of costs, indicating the items on which the award will be spent, and specify whether additional funding from other sources is being sought or has already been secured.

Applications, which should take the form of a letter (two sides maximum), should contain an outline description of the aims, rationale and nature of the proposed event. Applicants should also clearly demonstrate how it meets each of the above criteria, and include as much detail as possible about plans to ensure that the award will benefit SPA members. Additionally, applications to the Postgraduate Scheme require confirmation (signature and stamp) from a departmental postgraduate tutor/head of department that a host institution would be able to raise an account to hold funds transferred by the SPA (administered by the SPA treasurer)

The SPA reserves the right to pay the award in more than one instalment if this is appropriate, and to reject applications from those who have failed to fulfil small grant award conditions in the past.

Applications should be sent as an email attachment to Dr Majella Kilkey (M.M.Kilkey@hull.ac.uk), who will also respond to enquiries made to the same address.

Majella Kilkey
Small Grants Officer

The SPA
SOCIAL POLICY ASSOCIATION
SMALL GRANTS SCHEME
The sixth International Conference of the East Asian Social Policy Network (EASP) took place at the University of Sheffield in July 2009, and was attended by over 100 delegates from Asia, Europe, Australasia and North America. A vibrant atmosphere saw discussion informed by a wide range of theoretical, practical and cross-national perspectives that went well beyond a concern with the specifics of social policy in particular East Asian nations.

The opening plenary round table session, chaired by Martin Smith (Dean of Social Sciences at the University of Sheffield), set a broad tone for the event. Margarita Estevez-Abe (Syracuse University, USA) posed the question “What do we want to learn from the study of East Asian welfare states?” She argued that a European bias in the study of welfare – and a Scandinavian bias in particular – had driven the way we think about welfare. There was, she said, a pressing need for scholars to give greater attention to welfare arrangements outside of the west. However, she was critical of how debates about welfare in East Asia had evolved to date, particularly the idea that there is a unique East Asian model. Strong debate was all but guaranteed when EASP Chair Jin-Young Moon (Sogang University, South Korea) argued that there is a unique welfare regime in East Asia that is conceptually distinct from the western regimes identified by Esping-Andersen and others. Prof Moon suggested that social policy in the region features a strong role for the family, moderate market provision and weak state provision – a mix that contrasts with that of any of Esping-Andersen’s regimes.

Bob Deacon (Sheffield University) spoke about the impact of the global economic crisis on welfare restructuring. He felt the crisis had prompted a rediscovery of Keynesian economics and had also reinvigorated the IMF and renewed debates about global governance. He felt the emergence of the G20 was of great significance, but noted that other bodies that might be more pro-welfare such as the ILO (International Labour Organisation) and WHO (World Health Organisation) had not gained in power as much as those with an economic/financial focus. Indeed, he noted that while the G20 was strong but with limited legitimacy, the reverse remained true of the UN ECOSOC (Economic and Social Committee), despite calls to boost its status within the UN.

King Iun Ngok (Sun-Yat Sen University, China) closed the opening plenary with observations on China’s response to the economic crisis, noting that the scale of its fiscal stimulus – a two-year package worth some US$586 billion – reflected the global significance of China’s response. However, he doubted this would seriously challenge the dominant neo-liberal inspired frameworks of social policy that had evolved in China in the past thirty years, despite incremental changes.

Mari Osawa (University of Tokyo, Japan) acted as discussant for this session and opened the debate about both the nature of welfare in East Asia and the prospective impacts of the global economic crisis to the floor. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, no consensus emerged during this discussion and these two contested themes ran through many of the 55 papers featured in paper sessions over the two days. These were organised into ten streams:

- Social challenges of the global economic crisis and policy responses
- Income, poverty and social assistance
- (In)equality, inclusion and/or exclusion and social development
- The East Asian welfare regime and relations with other world
- Family and childcare
- East Asian regional politics and national policy
- Ageing, long-term care and pensions
- Urban and housing policy
- Health and disability across the life-course
- Education and social policy.

Papers also covered a wide range of cases, covering China (Hong Kong), Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, with many offering broader regional analyses - comparing East Asian nations with western cases or presenting broad comparative analyses covering welfare regimes and welfare types. Poster sessions also carried details of around 20 works in progress, including an EASP driven project to boost the quality and coverage of data about social policy in East Asia.

A plenary lecture by Alan Walker (University of Sheffield) rounded off the formal part of the first day of the conference. Identifying ‘Quality of Life’ as a multi-dimensional and holistic construct, he discussed the importance of understanding its dynamic multi-faceted nature, the combination of life course and immediate influences and the similarities and differences in the factors determining Quality of Life between varying age groups. For its social, environmental, structural and health-related aspects, he then argued that it is time to systematically pursue a comprehensive perspective which should include theoretically driven multi-disciplinary approaches as well as empirical findings with regards to the most important components of Quality of Life.

After more paper and poster sessions on the second day, Kinglun Ngok delivered the final plenary lecture of the conference. Reflecting on the development of social policy in China he argued that a welfare dualism had characterised provision historically, with a residual system in rural China and an institutional one in urban China and with the right to welfare being based on local residence rather than national citizenship. In the 1990s and early 2000s, however, the prioritisation of economic development had weakened many of the welfare rights in urban China too - a rolling back of the state that had occurred with some suggesting China had socialism without welfare.

However, he argued that since 2003 there were signs that the government was “bringing the state back in” as far as social policy was concerned. A commitment to a “scientific approach to development” and to promoting an “harmonious society” came to the fore and a gradual increase in social expenditure has followed, with central government using some of the increased income gained from the economic boom to address some of the weaknesses in its welfare provision. This, despite ongoing tensions between local and central government - the latter remaining poor in comparison to the centre, and so restricted in its ability to implement policy reform.

EASP received generous support in running the conference from the SPA Small Grants Scheme, Taiwanese Association of Social Policy and the White Rose East Asia Centre. The 7th International Conference will take place at Sogang University, Seoul, South Korea, from 20th-21st August 2010 - full details can be found online at www.welfareasia.org.

John Hudson (University of York), Gyu-Jin Hwang (University of Sydney) and Junko Yamashita (University of Bristol).
Welcome to the postgraduate pages for Policy World. In this issue we highlight inspiring academic practice in a report by the convenors of the Postgraduate Governance Research Network (PGRN). The domestic and international scope of the Network and its planned activities illustrates the way that modern postgraduate researchers have the creativity and skills to offer support, and effect change, for academic communities.

As the article explains, the Network’s roots lie in a conference funded by the SPA’s Small Grants Scheme. In recognition of the Network’s achievements, and in response to postgraduate members’ feedback, funding is now available for postgraduate applicants and events. See p18 for further details about the Small Grants Scheme and its benefits. If you want to arrange a conference, study group or networking event on a specific research area, the opportunity to apply for an award of up to £500 could be for you.

You will also find information about attending the 2010 SPA Conference. You can submit an abstract and present in a symposium, or simply enjoy the benefits of attending an established national conference. This includes networking and ‘teaching and learning’ events. This year’s conference features an information session for postgraduates about the Small Grants Scheme, and you may want to submit a paper to be considered for an SPA annual award. There is a prize for best postgraduate paper, with benefits including publication in Social Policy Review (subject to the editorial process). See page 16-17 for further details.

The second call for the 2010 SPA Annual Conference recently went out to members on the social policy jicsmail lists. If you are not already a jicsmail member, you can sign up to the SPA Jicsmail (social-policypostgraduate@jicsmail.ac.uk) to find out the latest on social policy and events, and communicate and share information with fellow members.

Finally, as a national organisation, the SPA wants to hear from you. Do you have ideas for events or feel there are issues facing the social policy postgraduate community that need addressing? If so, please feel free to contact me at r.dobson00@leeds.ac.uk

I look forward to meeting or hearing from you.

Rachael Dobson,
Postgraduate Representative, SPA

Social Policy Association Conference
5 - 7 July 2010, University of Lincoln

In a fresh approach, postgraduates are encouraged to showcase their research in a dedicated conference stream, symposium or poster event.

Why attend?
Attending the conference will provide you with a range of opportunities:

- **Introduce yourself to the social policy community** Perhaps this is the first time you have attended a conference, or maybe you want to share your research experiences and findings with an academic community. This will provide great experience for your development as an academic, and you can gain feedback from delegates.

- **Networking** This is a chance to meet with your peers, develop supportive networks and find out about future opportunities. A drinks reception for all delegates will enable you to meet your peers and more established scholars.

- **Learning** This is a chance to attend an established academic conference that attracts both international and domestic scholars. You will have the opportunity to attend a range of presentations by researchers and academics.

You can also attend a workshop to find out about postgraduate experiences of teaching social policy as well as some of the resources which are available to postgraduate teachers. This will be especially useful if you are thinking about teaching, or want to find out about learning resources.

You must be a member of the SPA to present your work and to take advantage of reduced conference fees.

Taking Part
You can:
- make a poster presentation
- present your research in a symposium
- get together with peers to submit a proposal for a symposium
- take part in a teaching and learning workshop
- attend networking events with peers and established scholars

Submission Information
Proposals will be reviewed by a Programme Committee prior to acceptance. The closing date for the submission of abstracts and proposals is Friday 19th March 2010. You will be asked to mark your abstract submission:

- ‘Postgraduate Symposium’
- ‘Postgraduate Poster Presentation’, or
- ‘Postgraduate Networks’.

Submissions should be sent by email to spa2010@lincoln.ac.uk.

Registration fees and travel expenses
There will be a 50% subsidy in registration fees for SPA or British Sociological Association members. Further details can be found at www.social-policy.com/conferences.aspx.

Up to £40 travel expenses are available to all SPA postgraduate members on a first come first served basis. Further details at www.social-policy.com/documents/SPAcall2010PGS.pdf.
The Postgraduate Governance Research Network (PGRN) is an international web-based forum for research students and early career researchers, founded and run by research students from the Department of Social and Policy Sciences (SPS) at the University of Bath. With a focus on empirical public policy research, the Network provides a forum for debate on issues of public policy governance. It aims to stimulate thinking and debates about governance as a conceptual tool to critically analyse the social world - especially with regard to public policy.

The Network brings members together to critically discuss ideas around governance, provide resources for governance studies, and develop a critical governance perspective relating to a range of social science disciplines. The network is open to all research students and early career researchers in the field, and so far has 29 members from 19 universities. The Network is now recruiting new members, and offers:

- a web-based forum for open discussion of new ideas and concepts
- research resources including book reviews, discussions of new publications and articles
- support in governance and public policy research
- events linking researchers using a critical approach
- a programme for peer review of papers.

The origins of PRGN
PGRN was developed following enthusiastic reception of the idea at a postgraduate workshop sponsored by the SPA, held in Bath in April 2009. Three doctoral research students, Hannah Durrant, Jenny Harlock, and Sarah Trimmer - all members of the Governance Research Group based at the University of Bath - brought together an international group of postgraduate students and academics at the ‘Critical Perspectives on Governance’ workshop. Key note speakers Professor Janet Newman, Professor John Clarke (Open University) and Dr Emma Carmel (University of Bath) led a series of small group discussions, and delegates presented working papers which formed the basis for some exciting and critically engaged discussions on cross-cutting themes in public policy governance.

Delegates welcomed the idea of establishing an on-line network to support ongoing interaction and exchange between governance researchers. Following the workshop, the PGRN was created and launched by the Governance Research Group. Current activities of the PGRN include developing the peer review programme and planning a future international seminar. Network members are invited to become involved in running the peer review programme for the network, and to suggest reading and relevant events, review books, and participate in online discussion.

How to get involved and become a member
To become a member of the Network visit the PGRN visit website (www.bath.ac.uk/soc-pol/postgraduate/PGRN/index.html) and complete and return the membership form. Once you have joined you will be able to access the members’ area of the website where you can access and contribute to our members’ wiki, contact other members, and participate in online discussion.

POSTGRADUATES STAY IN THE LOOP

SPA news and event announcements for postgraduates, as well as adverts for funding and job vacancies, are distributed via email - why not sign up now? It’s quick and easy to do - sign up to the SPA postgraduate community ‘Jiscmail’ (social-policypostgraduate@jiscmail.ac.uk) at www.jiscmail.ac.uk/. This website will allow you to access a whole range of on-line academic communities.

Lecturers and researchers – you can help by making sure postgraduates in your department know about Jiscmail.
FORTHCOMING EVENTS

30-31 March 2010.
Living and Learning, Learning and Teaching: Mental Health in Higher Education. University of Lancaster.

14 April 2010.
Integrating Substance Use into Social Work Education. Event to launch new learning and teaching materials. Centre for Excellence in Interdisciplinary Mental Health, University of Birmingham.

22-23 June 2010.
Shaping the Future: Exploring Impacts and Changes to the Student Learning Experience over the Next Five Years. Annual Higher Education Academy conference. De Havilland Campus, University of Hertfordshire.

7-9 July 2010.

For more information on these and other forthcoming events visit www.swap.ac.uk/events

STUDENT ESSAY COMPETITION

The Social Policy and Social Work Subject Centre (SWAP) runs an annual student essay competition. The winner will receive a prize including an iPod Touch and expenses paid attendance at the 2010 SPA annual conference. Their work will be published on the SWAP website and they will be invited to attend the Higher Education Academy’s annual conference in June 2010.

This year’s question is: “Sustainability literacy is a current buzz phrase, what does it mean to you and how does it impact on your life as a student?”

Please encourage your students to enter the competition and to send essays of approx 1,000 words to swapeditor@soton.ac.uk by 9th April 2010. More information about the competition can be found at www.swap.ac.uk/getinvolved/win.html

DEVOlUTION AND DIVERGENCE

The Devolution and Divergence conference (30 November – 1 December 2009) was hosted by the School of Healthcare Studies and the School of Nursing and Midwifery Studies at Cardiff University and sponsored by the Higher Education Academy together with subjects centres for Health Sciences and Practice, Social Policy and Social Work, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary.

The conference explored the ways in which policy priorities for health and social care in the four countries of the Union as well as design and delivery of services are becoming increasingly divergent as a result of devolution. A significant thread to the conference saw rich examples of micro performance which are making a difference to health care in Wales and Scotland. Sheila Hunt presented ‘Victor’s story’ – a powerful account of living with motor neurone disease in Scotland.

Two postgraduate students Andy Carson-Stevens and Keith Finn talked about student involvement in the Welsh 1,000 Lives Campaign (www.wales.nhs.uk/sites2/home.cfm?orgid=781), and the partnership between Healthcare Interprofessional Society (set up and run by students) and the Welsh Assembly (WA). Other sessions considered the impact of the Assembly’s adoption of UN conventions – for example, that of the child – which has resulted in the creation of a young people’s parliament, a Minister for Children, youth forums in each local authority and advocacy for children.

One repeated cautionary note was the challenge divergence appears to present to comparative data studies across the UK. Several presenters commented on the difficulty of measuring difference across the four countries or the difficulty of identifying data to evaluate the effects of impact of development and implementation. Much of the analysis presented and discussed focused on health care and delegate suggestions (fed back during the event) included redressing the balance to include social care - a valuable follow up theme for the conference organisers to consider. The two days proved very stimulating and thought provoking.

Presentations and posters from the event are now available to view online at: www.devolutionconference.co.uk/presentations.html

CRIMINOLOGY SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

Criminologists from across England, Scotland and Wales have come together to take forward plans to raise the profile of criminology across the Higher Education Academy. With thanks to four Subject Centres (C-SAP, Psychology, UKCLE and SWAP) for initial funding, the first strand of this work is to establish a national teaching award in collaboration with the British Society of Criminology and Sage publications. The group is working on criteria for this award, which will be open to all working in HE teaching criminology. It is anticipated that the first of these awards will be made in summer 2011. A planned Symposium on Teaching Criminology is scheduled for the summer and details of this will be announced shortly. The group is also developing a number of case studies to highlight examples of teaching practice within the discipline. If you would like to contribute to this aspect of the work please contact Helen Jones (h.jones@mmu.ac.uk).
The fourth edition of SWAP's newsletter In focus concentrates on the role of an admissions tutor and features an interview with a Director of Student Support. A theme common to both is the breadth of the admissions role - admissions tutors may find themselves integral to university outreach and open days, and few are simply involved in 'admitting' students.

To request a copy of In focus please contact swapteam@soton.ac.uk.

RESOURCES FOR SOCIAL POLICY ADMISSIONS TUTORS

The following resources could be incorporated into an open day for prospective students and their parents or recommended to schools prior to awareness raising visits to universities:

**What is social policy?**
The ESRC Festival of Science video (full version) explores the question of why social policy is important ([www.esrscocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/FSS/EventOrganisers/video.aspx#0](http://www.esrscocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/FSS/EventOrganisers/video.aspx#0)).

**Europarl TV** A site which includes videos and podcasts on issues include climate change, benefits and how the EU works ([www.europarl.tv.europa.eu](http://www.europarl.tv.europa.eu)).

**UK parliament education service.** Resources for 5-11; 11-14 and 14-18 year olds. Young people can blog with the Lords, chose a bill and guide it through the different stages to become law, play speaker’s chair and act as a lawmaker.

**Why does social policy matter?**
University professors of social policy argue the case ([www.swap.ac.uk/resources/digitalresources/video.html#spa_clips](http://www.swap.ac.uk/resources/digitalresources/video.html#spa_clips)).

**What types of careers follow on from a social policy degree?**
Official graduate careers websites such as Prospects ([http://www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)) show that social policy graduates have a very good record of finding work in the public, voluntary and private sectors. Careers for which a social policy degree is particularly relevant include management or policy work in central and local government; in key service sectors such as the penal system, education, health and sports and leisure; voluntary and non-governmental organisations, and retail management. Several universities post alumni comments on their websites and these can be a good resource for demonstrating the career paths of graduates.

**WEB RESOURCES**

**Where are you heading?**
A website maintained by Directgov ([http://yp.direct.gov.uk/14-19prospectus](http://yp.direct.gov.uk/14-19prospectus)) helps young people to search for all the qualifications and courses in their local area, and is an invaluable guide for admissions tutors interested in outreach work with local schools and colleges.

**Supporting professionalism in admissions**
The Supporting Professionalism in Admissions Programme aims to facilitate the development of fair admissions and good practice in admissions, recruitment and widening participation across the UK sector. It’s website ([www.spa.ac.uk](http://www.spa.ac.uk)) carries guidance on admissions tests, interviews and applicant experience as well as information about 14-19 developments in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

**Inclusion and diversity**
The resources section on the SWAP website has a page dedicated to inclusion and diversity which provides links to project outputs, case studies and other publications relating to transition into university, traditional and non-traditional entrants, fairness and equity. Visit [www.swap.ac.uk/resources/themes/inclusion.html](http://www.swap.ac.uk/resources/themes/inclusion.html).

**Higher Ambitions: the future of universities in a knowledge economy (2009)**
The higher education blueprint published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills includes a continued commitment to fair access and increased focus on consideration of contextual data with regard to recruitment. Visit [www.bis.gov.uk/policies/higher-ambitions](http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/higher-ambitions).

Inclusion of the sites on this list does not constitute a recommendation in relation to the quality or currency of resources or information found on these sites.

**NEW QUALIFICATIONS**

University admissions criteria for students wishing to take social policy or social policy as part of another subject can be accessed through the UCAS website ([www.ucas.ac.uk](http://www.ucas.ac.uk)) which also lists all undergraduate courses with significant social policy content. These criteria now include Diploma qualifications. Prospective students and their parents can also search, review and compare subjects at universities and colleges in the UK through the associated Unistats website ([www.unistats.com](http://www.unistats.com)).

**More on the new diplomas**
‘After I finish my Diploma I’m going to look at studying Applied Psychology and Social Policy at university’ (case study included in Society, Health and Development Diploma leaflet).


‘If students have completed this Diploma … they would be better equipped to start my course’ (Dr. Jim Goddard, lecturer in social policy, Bradford University)

For more information about the Public Services Diploma (to be taught in schools from September 2010) view the video ([http://yp.direct.gov.uk/diplomas/subjects/public_services](http://yp.direct.gov.uk/diplomas/subjects/public_services)) and associated information leaflets.

**Topics include wind farms, national service, and school attendance incentives ([www.parliament.uk/education/index.htm](http://www.parliament.uk/education/index.htm)).**
New and forthcoming titles from The Policy Press

Understanding Welfare
Social Issues, Policy and Practice series
Series Editor: Saul Becker, Professor of Social Policy & Social Care, University of Nottingham

Understanding human need
Hartley Dean

“Hartley Dean’s book certainly meets a need: he expertly summarises debates over what human needs are, how they relate to happiness and capabilities, and what they entail for human rights and social policies. An invaluable book.”
Ian Gough, Emeritus Professor of Social Policy, University of Bath and co-author of A theory of human need

INSPECTION COPY AVAILABLE

Understanding social welfare movements
Jason Annett, Alex Law, Wallace McNeish and Gerry Mooney

“Until now, studies of social welfare and social movements have pursued largely separate tracks. The authors of this book bring them together, opening a new world of questions. This argumentative and lively book will leap onto ‘must-read’ lists.”
Colin Barker, Manchester Metropolitan University

INSPECTION COPY AVAILABLE

Also in the Understanding Welfare series

Forthcoming in June 2010

Understanding theories and concepts in social policy
Ruth Lister

“An excellent and essential text for students and teachers which will help them get to grips with the whys and wherefores of contemporary social policy.”
Fiona Williams, Professor of Social Policy, University of Leeds

Utilising diverse examples from contemporary social policy, this lively and accessible text demonstrates that theory can help us to understand policy, politics and practice.

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