

Editorial

Dr Tony Maltby (Managing Editor)

Senior Lecturer in Social Policy, University of Birmingham, UK

Welcome to this new journal of the Social Policy Association, whose fundamental aim is to bring the study of social policy to a wider audience. It intends to mark itself out as distinct from its older sister, the *Journal of Social Policy*, the leading journal in the discipline, yet at the same time remain closely associated with it and complement its work. Drawing upon research and developments in all key social sciences, the journal will aim to provide an important new outlet for relevant, contemporary and stimulating articles from the specialist and non-specialist alike on a wide variety of issues concerning public and social policy. Articles can be theoretical or empirical in nature (or both) or speculative, but all will be authoritatively written.

However, it is not intended that the journal becomes simply a vehicle for dissemination of academic research, although such articles are important and will, of course, be welcomed. One of the objectives for *Social Policy and Society* will be to reflect the current debates around the development of policy at the national, international and European levels and to offer well-informed analysis and critical review of such policy. It will also provide space to allow coverage of the continuing debates on teaching and learning issues within the discipline from a truly global perspective. This aspect of the journal is one of its unique features. Additionally, I will actively encourage submissions from what are euphemistically termed ‘practitioners’, those working at the ‘sharp end’, delivering social policy – for example, GPs, nurses, health visitors, social workers, teachers and ‘street level bureaucrats’.

Each issue will contain a themed section, guest edited by a leading academic and will enclose refereed articles together with a list of useful electronic and bibliographic sources and a review article of some of the important texts within the themed area. There will also be space for original and substantive articles of around 4,000 words, for example reporting the results of research or providing an overview of ‘work in progress’ or pieces from practitioners reflecting on their practice. The journal will establish a ‘Commentary’ section, welcoming articles that offer critical commentary on policy issues with a strong emphasis upon current developments. I anticipate that this section of the journal will encourage written responses from readers in the form of articles. I do not see it as replacing the instantaneous discussion prevalent within the ubiquitous email discussion lists, but a space and an opportunity for a more thought through, cogent and rigorous response.

As policy is dynamic, it is envisaged that all articles will be published within a year of acceptance, often less. The plan is to provide a refereed journal that will provide an outlet for almost immediate responses to those issues that arise on to the political, social and economic agenda at all levels of organisation, the global, the supra-national (e.g. European Union), the national and local. Although it will allow an additional opportunity for UK – based academics at least, to cash one more RAE article in the bank, this is not is

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primary intention. More importantly, *Social Policy and Society* will become a journal in which the broad and diverse discipline of social policy can be discussed and developed through a rapid turnover of significant articles and allow meaningful debate upon contemporary social and public policy issues.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in getting the journal to publication over a period of in excess of two years. From the members of the editorial board, through to the referees, to the contributors of this first issue, to those who have submitted articles, to colleagues at Cambridge University Press. I trust that you will read and contemplate upon the articles, contribute yourself to its content and use that same content in your work and practice.