

*I wish the Journal every success in continuing to inform, inspire, encourage debate, and build the bridges that enable agencies and individuals to engage in addressing the needs of young people today.*

Paul Gardner has recently taken up post as Director of Health Improvement for the Somerset Coast Primary Care Trust; this article is written in a personal capacity.

## Paul Gardner

# *Education and Health:* a personal reflection

Volume 20 is introduced by the author who, in 1983, wrote the introduction to Volume 1.

**I**t was twenty years ago today - well almost, but not quite to this day - that *Education and Health*, was launched to promote the potential for collaboration across agencies and between individuals.

Over the intervening years, the work of the Schools Health Education Unit (SHEU) has had an influence upon the development of local health and education policies throughout the UK. SHEU's health profiles of children and young people have become established as the basis for joint planning many initiatives and new services, as well as comprising one of the largest informative databases anywhere.

It is to the credit of the team, headed by John Balding, that so much potential has been realized from a relatively small, but dedicated Unit.

### Integration

I had the privilege of writing the introductory article for the new journal which was published in January 1983. The proposal behind that first article was to see a greater integration of joint working across our respective agencies. The key word here is integration, and there have been real opportunities over the last twenty years to take this forward.

The multi-agency initiatives of 'Education Action Zones' and 'Health Action Zones' have underpinned policy developments in "multi-sectoral collaboration". The philosophy to this approach reflects the intimate relationship between Education and Health, be it through needs analysis, curriculum development or service delivery.

Health status is dependent upon the

### Twenty volumes of *Education and Health*

January 1983 saw the first issue of *Education and Health*. Paul Gardner asked what the journal would contribute to the debate surrounding the field of health education,

"I hope it will be multi-disciplinary, include examples of practice and, where possible, the results of practice, since these provide the most valuable insights".

Under the guidance of James Muirden, the journal has featured a broad range of topics and provided an invaluable resource for all those interested in the healthy development of young people.

The current subject index ([www.sheu.org.uk/](http://www.sheu.org.uk/)) contains articles that range from *AIDS/HIV* through to *Young People in 2000*. Articles have been written by people from across the health and education spectrum and have provided a local, national and international perspective to education and health issues.

Paul Gardner, writing in 2002, concludes with the following:

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educational attainment of young people at many levels including health inequalities and education for health.

More recently, initiatives such as 'Sure Start' and 'The Children's Fund' have brought together voluntary and statutory agencies to address the delivery of services for children and how to improve the delivery of these services, with particular reference to addressing health deprivation, access to health services and the social exclusion agenda.

### Local needs

Local information and local health needs are essential prerequisites of designing new services and addressing priorities within localities. Invariably the profiles derived from the work of the Schools Health Education Unit have provided a firm basis for assessing these plans.

Service delivery can only be based upon the delivery of clear plans and these in turn are underpinned with valid and reliable information. Increasingly, it has been my experience that detailed locality based information is hard to find and there are issues about how well such information is correlated across information systems drawn from different agencies. It is something that we are all working towards; the SHEU profiles have proved to be invaluable because they provide information at a very local level about what is happening on the ground.

### Profile

How young people's health needs and behaviours are profiled within the individual and collectively within the school or across schools, provides insights into health needs, trends and localities. They may appear similar, yet vary considerably according to their own local make-up. As a means of engaging people across agencies it is an important tool; the ability to take a school's profile and re-analyse it across the constituent GP practices is to my knowledge unique and yet drives forward the means by which agencies can have that

dialogue across the table.

### What of the future?

I would return to my key theme of integration. There will be opportunities with the forthcoming 'NHS National Service Framework for Children', for agencies to review the extent of their joint collaboration. This could include reviewing joint planning and joint commissioning arrangements.

### Strategy

How well are children's services planned from a strategic point of view? Is there an opportunity to look at how to bring together many of the present initiatives, such as 'Sure Start', 'The Children's Fund' and 'The National Healthy School Standard' into a single strategic framework?

Certainly the establishment of this National Service Framework will mean that children, their needs and their families needs will be firmly towards the top of the policy agenda.

Those of us engaged in the delivery of services for children should take this opportunity to ensure that long-standing recommendations about planning with a child-led focus, rather than an organisational focus, should be put into practice. This means looking at pathways of service delivery that cuts across organizations and cuts across funding streams and resource allocations. It can be done, and importantly the opportunity to see that it is done is arriving now!

### Onward

*Education and Health* continues to inform, inspire and encourage debate; I wish the Journal and the team at the Schools Health Education Unit every success in continuing to build the bridges that enable agencies and individuals to engage in addressing the needs of young people today.

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