

## EDITORIAL

*Peter Limbrick*

Welcome to Issue No. 3 of the new Interconnections Quarterly Journal. Please remember that your comments are always welcome – as are your articles. This issue is as much about change as about anything else. This is not surprising because the proper function of any professional journal is surely about reporting and promoting change and improvements.

So how far have we got in the UK with changes and improvements to support for disabled people, disabled children and their families and carers? Sometimes I am enormously encouraged, sometimes I feel the train is just about pulling out of the station on a very long journey. Sometime I feel the train is about to return to the sidings because there is not enough fuel to send it anywhere.

I am enthused and inspired by very many people 'at the coalface' (changing the metaphor). People like Deborah Berkeley, her baby Alice and her speech and language therapist who together have just achieved first words (see page 18); people like Beverly Searle who survived her own trials and tribulations and then achieved a position from which she can help other families (see page 5); people like Roger and Margaret Wilson-Hinds who are both blind but devote their lives to helping other blind people (see page 11); people like John Tattersall who has a learning disability and helps young people learn about sex and relationships (see page 30).

I am encouraged by such organisation as MOVE that have brought a very successful joined-up approach to children with physical disabilities (see page 21) and the TAC service in Walsall (one of the early ones) that extends collaborative pre-school work to give the child and family a better experience in school and during the transition (see page 13).

All of this is good practice and must be celebrated and supported. But these examples are just pointing the way. Each is good work, but we cannot boast about them as good practice in the UK until they are available to every child and family that need them – and at the time when they need them. It is a sad fact that innovators like the writers of these articles, very rarely have the resources to bring their work to every child and family in need. Until we have significant change in government commitment (national and local) and adequate resources, many of these signposts will have no practical implications for most children and adults with disabilities.

John Wright alerts us to the danger of Educational Statements being written in a way that helps a Local Education Authority avoid having to spend what is needed to meet a child's real needs (see page 2). Justin Simon offers constructive suggestions to prevent disabled children and families from black and other minority ethnic communities having an inferior service (see page 33). Deborah Berkeley, while celebrating Alice's first words worries about her own mental health and points us all to

a mountain of unmet need. The good people who help Alice in the various agencies, do not think to ask Deborah how she is coping. When she appeals to her GP for help she is given anti-depressants. This is London, UK. This is 2008.

When it comes to allocating funds to improve services we are told money is in short supply. This is offered as an excuse for disabled people, disabled children and their families, languishing for ever at the bottom of everyone's list of priorities. This is offered as the reason for disability to often (too often) equate with an impoverished life experience. Do not believe any of it. We are not suffering from any lack of money in the UK, just a lack of awareness and concern in the people who make decisions about how to spend our taxes. Think of Iraq. Think of Afghanistan. Think of the banks. For these causes there have been amounts of money so huge that I would not know how to write them down.