



# Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability (Northern Ireland)

## Learning Disability Committee Newsletter No. 2 October 2003

Welcome ...

to the 2<sup>nd</sup> newsletter from the Learning Disability Committee. We hope that it will bring all those interested in the learning disability review up to date on latest developments.

We hope you find it useful.

We would be very pleased if you would share this newsletter with anyone you think might be interested in it.

If you would like a copy that you can share by e mail- go to the Review web site at

<http://www.rmhdni.gov.uk>



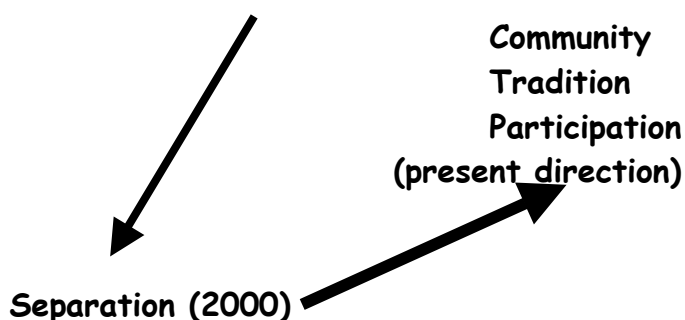
### “Unique People - Unique Support”

On 9th September we were delighted to host a meeting with Professor Kent and Patricia Ericsson in the Fitzwilliam Hotel.

The Ericssons are experts in learning disability services and Kent has written many books and articles that have been published across the world. They both work in Sweden but took time out from their recent holiday in Ireland to meet with service users, carer's representatives and staff to share information about how services have developed in Sweden.

Kent explained that services for people with an intellectual disability in Sweden have changed greatly over recent years. He said that this change showed a shift from an **institutional** tradition of support to a **community** tradition.

**Institutionalisation (1800's)**



He explained that in the 1800's people who could not cope with the growth of big industries were put away in big institutions. At that time people thought this was a caring way of making sure that vulnerable people did not get left to fall by the wayside. Since the war most European countries have moved towards a position of helping people with an intellectual disability live in communities but often they were kept separate. Nowadays many countries see that people should be given the chance to be full and valued members of their community.

(Continued overleaf)

# **Unique People- Unique Support** *(continued from front page)*

Kent explained that this move to a community tradition is based on a belief in human rights.

Although the shift is happening across Europe, how it works out in practice, may be different in each country because of local conditions.



*Professor Kent Ericsson*

In Sweden a new law was introduced in 1999 that made it illegal to have people live in large institutions. In addition no residential service would be recognised if it had more than 5 residents. Kent stressed that the closure of the big institutions was a means to an end and not the aim itself. The important factor was the belief that everyone has a right to a home in the community.

Patricia Ericsson then shared examples from her 30 years experience in running services for people with an intellectual disability. She told us how she had studied over 100 people who had successfully moved from a big hospital to live in the community. Although many people had predicted that it would not work; in most cases the former patients were living full lives in their own homes. She stressed that this was achieved because the people who planned

the services understood that the same service would not suit everyone.

*" They saw that they were all unique persons with unique needs requiring unique support. There are no standard solutions"*

Patricia told us that her research showed that the best services were developed when staff saw everyone as unique and worked to find out what unique skills and talents each individual has.

Siobhan Bagues thanked the Ericssons for taking the time to share their ideas. She said that in the Learning Disability Review we are keen to learn from other countries. She said that she would remember especially the idea that staff have a duty to discover the uniqueness in each person with a learning disability and that the lesson is that *a one size fits all service* just will not work.

## **Carers Advisory Group Established**

Over 40 family carers joined members of the Learning Disability Committee at an information session on 1<sup>st</sup> July. After an introductory talk about the Review the participants shared their views on the key issues for parents whose son or daughter has a learning disability. Comments included;

- 'experts' rarely know the real issues and should respect the fact that parents and other family carers are the experts
- Profoundly disabled people are 'Cinderellas' of learning disability services
- Greatest evil is social isolation - legislation is not the only answer.
- Parents should not have to fight battles to find out what is available – a booklet would help
- Problems change with age – never go away - different battles commence at each stage
- Carers health & careers effected
- More information is needed about access to benefits ...

From this meeting a Carers Advisory Group has been set up that is currently planning events across Northern Ireland to hear the views of other carers.

For more information contact the Review Support Team.

## Listening To People With A Learning Disability

Since the last newsletter progress has been made in extending the ways in which we will listen to people with a learning disability. At the moment we are making sure that people with a learning disability have a place on the groups that we set up as part of the Review.

We also sent out an invitation in May to people with a learning disability who would be willing to join a group to help us make sure that we listened to the views of people who will be most affected by the Review. We received many names and a group has been set up. Paul Roberts, Siobhan Wylie and Siobhan Bogues support the group. It has met twice and it will arrange four public meetings later this year with people with a learning disability. The group will then do a report of the issues that the people who come to the meetings think are important. All the committees in the Review will get a copy and will be expected to take account of the ideas in their work.



The open meetings will be held on the following dates:

- 5<sup>th</sup> November Armagh Theatre
- 6<sup>th</sup> November Grosvenor Conference Centre, Belfast
- 20<sup>th</sup> November Adair Arms Hotel, Ballymena
- 3<sup>rd</sup> December Silver Birch Hotel, Omagh

If you or someone you know would like to come to a meeting please let us know and we will send you more details.

## Yes Minister..

On 16<sup>th</sup> September the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety- Angela Smith, hosted a reception at Hillsborough Castle for all those who are involved with the Review of Mental health and Learning Disability. During the evening she met members of the learning disability committee, carers and service users. This gave them all a good opportunity to tell the Minister how the Review is progressing and to stress the importance of the Review making a real difference to people's lives.



*The minister with Joanne Mc Donald, Maureen Piggot and Siobhan Bogues*

## A Question of Capacity.....




The Legal Issues Committee of the Review hosted a seminar in September, which considered issues in deciding if individuals have the capacity to make informed decisions about various aspects of their lives. These deliberations will be feedback to the office of Law reform, which will shortly be circulating a consultation paper that will pave the way for new legislation on this subject.

## Read All About It.....

In this newsletter we are trying to give you a quick update on some of the work being done on the Learning Disability Review. If you would like to read in more detail the Learning Disability Committee discussions you can visit the Review website where we will shortly begin to put all minutes of our meetings.

( [www.rmhdni.gov.uk](http://www.rmhdni.gov.uk) )

# Task Group Update

Task Group	Update
<p>In the last newsletter we shared our plans to set up 6 task groups that will all help the Learning Disability Committee produce its report. Here is the latest news on how that plan has moved on with 3 of the groups. The other groups are looking at physical health, mental well being and day opportunities - we will give you full details on these groups in the next newsletter...</p>	
<p>Accommodation and Support</p> 	<p>Professor Roy Mc Conkey from the University of Ulster has set up this group that is looking at where people should live and the type of support that they should have in their homes. This group has been able to read a major research report that Professor Mc Conkey did where he met with many people with a learning disability and family carers and asked for their views on what type of homes people with a learning disability should have. The group has also looked at policy papers and other publications. They will shortly be doing a presentation to the Learning Disability Committee on their first ideas for improving the situation.</p>
<p>Ageing Issues</p> 	<p>This group has been set up by Moira Scanlon and has met twice so far. They are planning an event on 10<sup>th</sup> October where they will invite older parents, service users and staff from across Northern Ireland to discuss what the issues are for caring for someone with a learning disability as they get older and also how best to support people to lead full lives into old age. This event will help the group prepare their suggestions about what needs to change in the future.</p>
<p>Children And Young People</p> 	<p>Maureen Piggot has been working all summer to agree the membership of this task group, which met for the first time in late September. This group will examine a wide range of issues affecting children and young people with a learning disability and their families; Topics to be covered include early intervention and diagnosis, schooling and play.</p>

**For more information on anything in this newsletter contact:**

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