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Report on the STEPS professional advisory group

Group co-ordinators:

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Background

STEPS has established a group of professionals from service-providing organisations and the local authority in Hamburg to monitor and evaluate the outcome of “STEPS” as social service experts. The results of the meetings are returned to the International Network. The group is primarily interested in focussing on people with severe disabilities and challenging behaviour.

Objectives of the Project:

Collection of claims, concerns and issues.

Methodology:

First year:

- Discussion and reflection on the basis of the professional's input and daily experience.
- Discussion of the STEPS experience on the basis of input from the project management.
- The themes are based on the discussions in the local Hamburg Partnership, the International STEPS-Network and the advisory group of people with learning disabilities.



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Description of the activities:

The advisory group of professionals held four meetings:

- 11.12.2002 Presentation of STEPS, discussion about support, assistance and advocacy and residential vs. non-residential/individualised services
- 26.03.2003 Residential vs. non-residential/individualised services; realisation of human rights; financing
- 17.06.2003 Planning methods and support models
- 20.10.2003 Agenda for the second year of STEPS; "Person centred planning" – experience from the local project in London

Achievements/Outcomes:

In general the professionals benefit from the participation in STEPS through

- Evaluation of own experience and synergies for their own practice.
- Involvement of group members in the bilateral user and staff exchange with Sweden and the Netherlands.

The professional group has discussed the following claims and issues:

Claims:

- Advocacy, support, complaint and quality Management should be organised independently from the service-providing-organisations and the local authorities. These tasks could be organised by regional advisory offices or agencies.
- An advisor, supporter or advocate should know the user and his/her life story personally.
- Services should be organised flexibly and individually according to the needs of the user. At the same time the user and the service-providing organisation must ensure reliability in planning.
- The user should be able to combine non-residential/individualised services and living together with other people with learning disabilities.
- Free choices.
- Individualised service planning.



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Issues:

- The following were highlighted as central problems to be solved in the discussion about residential and non-residential/individualised services:
 - Staff's loyalty to user vs. loyalty to service providing organisation.
 - Self-determination vs. economisation.
 - Financial risks vs. financial reliability.
 - Misuse of power vs. control of colleagues.
 - Isolation vs. living in a group home
 - Autonomy vs. security.
- Concerning service planning: Should services be planned in connection with funds?
If yes, the planning conference could degenerate into a negotiation about money.
If not, the liability of the conference and its result have to be assured in another way.

Information on co-operation between the partners involved and other interest groups:

The advisory group of professionals is very committed to STEPS and is interested in enhancing non-discriminative services, self-determination and the participation of people with learning disabilities on the basis of their own experience.

They hope to real benefit from the international co-operation programme for their everyday work.

Forthcoming events:

The participants of the advisory group have agreed to discuss and pass recommendations to enhance self-determination and participation for people with learning disabilities. The following themes are on the agenda for the second year:

- | | |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10.12.03 | Social space |
| 28.01.04 | Education, further education, employment and occupation of people with learning disabilities |
| 25.03.04 | Quality management and assurance (from the user's point of view) |
| 06.05.04 | Qualification and demands on professionals |
| 17.06.03 | Financing (from the user's point of view) |



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To make their recommendations known to the public the advisory group is considering about a small public conference or workshop at the end of the project.

Products developed and available:

- Minutes from the meetings
- Report of Sylvia Zwierlein: A delegation from the Protestant Foundation "Alsterdorf" visits Pameijerkeerkring and OMIJ Rijnmond in Rotterdam
- Report: Staff members from the Foundation Das Rauhe Haus visit Lidingö

Anne Ernst

10. November 2003