



Enclosure 4

Starting points for STEPS

Foreword:

In STEPS different municipalities with different cultural backgrounds, different social welfare systems and different traditions in social work are planning to improve, shape and change services for people with learning disabilities in order to reduce discrimination and exclusion. The partners from London/Canterbury, Barcelona, Lidingö/Uppsala, Rotterdam and Hamburg want to develop ways towards emancipation, participation and solidarity. The differences of structures and backgrounds in cities, services and institutions involved in STEPS are a chance to share experiences, best practices and also failures. Even taking these differences into consideration, the following ten starting-points have been identified as common to all partners. They should be addressed in the second part of STEPS-programme as key challenges for STEPS and the local partnerships.

1. About 10 percent of all human beings in Europe are estimated to be disabled. One percent live in residential care homes. In each of these groups, people with learning disabilities are the most marginalized and excluded citizens. They have the weakest lobby, which is mostly dominated either by problems of physically handicapped people or those of senior citizens. They are not recognised as full citizens with the same rights, needs and wishes.
2. Men and women with learning disabilities suffer from multiple discrimination. As well as the discrimination due to their learning disabilities, they are also discriminated on grounds of gender, of sexual orientation, of ethnic origin and age. Further more they have restricted access to work, material and cultural resources. Most of them are treated as human beings without sex, gender, age. They are not presumed to have the ability to express themselves in work or leisure.
3. Men and women with learning disabilities are members of a family and a social network which should be recognised as an important resource for their life and biography.

4. The UN-Convention of Human Rights, the UN-Declaration of Rights for People with learning Disabilities and the EU-Resolution on Equality of Opportunity for People with Disabilities are an existing framework for politics, social work and social services. The above need to be implemented and realised in daily practice.
5. Residential care is based on the tradition of huge institutions, founded in the 19th century. Their social services tended to be specialised allround-services providing shelter and minimising risk. They produced specialised circumstances of life and tended to reinforce exclusion and discrimination whilst providing shelter.
6. Financial resources of cities and societies are often (in a different level) distributed as budgets to institutions and not handed over to individuals as their personal budget for support and assistance.
7. An opening market of social services delivers ambivalence between increasing choices and risks: A risk will be for example, that providers will select between lucrative and expensive “clients”. Quality control of services will become more difficult.
8. The institutions of social welfare as well as the administrations have gained a lot of experience in decentralisation and care at home. Structures and law have changed and are still changing. But structural measures and principles of action towards emancipation, community based services and solidarity in the community are still underdeveloped.
9. People with severe learning disabilities and challenging behaviour are in danger of being excluded from changes towards community based services and thus will stay in residential care-homes.
10. Communities are not prepared for integrating citizens with learning disabilities because of the tradition of exclusion. Social services often have no trust in the community’s ability to support these men and women. As a consequence professionals and families are afraid of increasing discrimination, isolation and stigmatisation.

These above mentioned key-challenges are also challenges for social services coping with problems of other marginalized groups in society.

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