

two segments of the community share common needs, the focus is on what sets them apart: on disability, rather than old age. The general increase in life expectancy in recent years, which also holds true for people with ID, has given rise to a new issue: old age with ID and the subsequent need to question existing care models for this time of life. Some believe that specialist services should be set up, whereas others argue that the criteria and resources applied here should be the same as for the population at large.

Some of the situations described have highlighted the extent to which the support provided and referrals made are in line with 'normal' criteria, sometimes to the point of blatant discrimination. These include refusing or challenging the need to carry out medical tests in cases of suspected neurological deterioration, on the grounds that the person already had brain damage before the warning sign was apparent. Another instance is the dilemma of whether a home for the elderly is more appropriate than one for the disabled, when an individual requires temporary or permanent residential care. Once again, it all boils down to deciding between inclusive or exclusive criteria when seeking contextual responses to individual and collective needs and desires.

Concepts and theories aside, our work on the ground is proving day after day that:

- An array of resources and models suitable for differing personal profiles is needed.
- We cannot make decisions based on needs and difficulties alone; major importance must also be attached to personal choices and expectations.
- The person concerned must be at the heart of all service planning.
- Opportunities and decisions are, again, contingent upon personal background and the extent to which the person has previously achieved social inclusion.
- Programs and models for cooperation and coordination must be set up as part of the social services network.
- Specialist care services for people with disabilities can shore up the network of general social services to adapt it to specific needs.

– It is incumbent on the authorities to devise cross-cutting policies and universal services rather than taking a piecemeal approach based solely on creating more specialist services.

Spain's recent approval and publication of a law to promote personal autonomy and dependence and, even more significantly, the Regional Government of Catalonia's Social Services Act of 11 October 2007 should set a new reference framework for drafting social policies in our country and pushing forward new programs, project and services that will ultimately shake up and improve the current state of affairs. Let us hope that the coming into force of these laws will uphold and bolster their underlying principles and objectives.

Bibliography

- Ley 39/2006, de 14 de diciembre, de Promoción de la Autonomía Personal y Atención a las personas en situación de dependencia. Boletín Oficial del Estado, nº 299, (15-12-2006).
- Llei de Serveis Socials, 12/2007 d'11 d'octubre. Diari Oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya, nº 4990, (18-10-2007); p. 37788.
- Projecte Seneca. Avaluació de les necessitats de les persones grans amb discapacitat intel·lectual a Catalunya [Internet] [accés 31 d'octubre de 2007]. Disponible en: <http://appsseneca.com/publica/documents/FORUM%202003%20d%27internet.ppt>
- Schalock RL. La calidad de vida como agente del cambio: oportunidades y retos. En: Verdugo MA, Jordán de Urríes Vega FB, coordinadores. Rompiendo inercias. Claves para avanzar: VI Jornadas científicas de investigación sobre personas con discapacidad. Salamanca: Amarú; 2006. p. 15-39.
- Servei de Suport a la Vida Independent «Me'n vaig a casa» (FCSD) [Internet] [accés 31 d'octubre de 2007]. Disponible en: <http://www.fcsc.org/ca/serveis/pvi.html>

News

Ms Montserrat Trueta i Llacuna, the President of the Board of Trustees of the Fundació Catalana Síndrome de Down, has been awarded the Gold Cross of the Civil Order of Social Solidarity by Spain's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

Pursuant to Order TAS/3126/2007 of 22 October 2007, this honor has been awarded to Montserrat Trueta at the behest of the State Secretary's Office for Social Services, Families and Disability, in recognition of a lifetime's contribution to providing care and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities, and of her work at the head of the Fundació Catalana Síndrome de Down.